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AUTHOR Hodgson, Ann, Ed.; Spours, Ken, Ed.
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ABSTRACT

This document presents and discusses case studies that examined the relationship between part-time employment and advanced level study at 15 schools in Essex, England. "Foreword" (David Jones) provides a brief overview of the project. "Finding a Balance--Fifteen Institutional Case Studies on the Relationship between Part-time Work and Advanced Level Study" (Ann Hodgson and Key Spours) explains how the studies were carried out and discusses the following themes raised in the individual case studies: patterns of part-time work; teacher, student, parent, and employer attitudes toward students' part-time work; effects of part-time work on achievement; patterns of study and part-time work; gender differences among A level students; the balance between paid work, study, and other aspects of sixth form life; and Curriculum 2000 and larger programs of study. The remainder of the document consists of the case studies, which are titled as follows: "The Billericay School, Billericay" (Brian Balchin); "The John Bramston School, Witham" (Phil Newbury); "Chelmer Valley High School, Broomfield" (Jim Aylen-Smith); "Clacton County High School, Clacton-on-Sea" (Peter Wakeford); "Colbayns High School, Clacton-on-Sea" (John Raynor); "Davenant Foundation School, Loughton" (Elizabeth Moore); "The Harwich School, Harwich" (Suzanne Lynch); "Hylands School, Chelmsford" (Ian Rawstone); "Mayflower High School, Billericay" (Richard Maples); "Philip Morant School, Colchester" (Peter Johnson); "Rickstones Sixth Form College, Witham" (Maria Burton); "St. Mark's West Essex Catholic School, Harlow) (Ann Lawler); "St. Peter's High School, Burnham-on-Crouch" (Glen Michael); "Saffron Walden County High School, Saffron Walden" (Stephen Munday); and "The Sandon School, Sandon" Richard Chandler). (MN)

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Lifelong Learning Group

Finding a Balance

Fifteen Institutional Case Studies on the Relationship between Part-time Work and Advanced Level Study

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October 2000

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Learning Services

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Pursuing Excellence in Education

Finding a Balance

Fifteen Institutional Case Studies
on the Relationship between
Part-time Work and
Advanced Level Study

Edited by
Ann Hodgson & Ken Spours

October 2000

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Foreword

This publication is the fifth in a series of collaborative ventures between Essex LEA and the Lifelong Learning Group at the Institute of Education. Previous reports have considered formative value-added developments, the response of institutions to the proposed reforms in the 1996 Dearing Report on 16-19 Qualifications and issues for schools preparing for 16-19 Curriculum 2000.

The present document is the culmination of work undertaken by fifteen senior and middle managers drawn from eighteen Essex 11-18 Secondary schools. The project, supported by Standards Fund 16 (Qualifications), has once again been ably led by Ken Spours and Ann Hodgson of the Institute. Both project meeting days featured high quality briefings and offered scope for energetic debate, whilst participants were also able to undertake in-school research on the issue of part-time work commitments, and their impact upon the motivation and achievements of sixth form students.

I have had the pleasure of undertaking local facilitation of the Project within Essex, in my capacity of Senior Advisor, with a particular responsibility for the 14-19 curriculum. I am confident that readers will find much to interest them in individual school perspectives, together with the analytical overview provided by Ken and Ann. I am grateful for their expertise and insight and to my colleagues in Essex schools who have offered practical institutional perspectives on the developments covered within the Project. The fact that over one third of Essex 11-18 schools were eager to participate is testimony to both the quality of the Project leaders and the interest there is in this issue as Curriculum 2000 gets underway this year.

May I commend the publication to you.

David Jones
Senior Advisor Curriculum Development

Section One

Finding a Balance - Fifteen Institutional Case Studies on the Relationship Between Part-time Work and Advanced Level Study

Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours

Introduction

The Labour Force Survey indicates that there has been a steady increase in the number of 16-19 year olds in full-time education working part-time during the 1990s (DfEE, 1998). Local studies, however, suggest that the numbers of young people both studying full-time and working are significantly bigger than those recognised by official national studies (Hodgson & Spours, 2000; FEDA, 1999).

So far, surveys in this area have focused largely on patterns of part-time work and have been of interest to researchers, policy makers and practitioners involved with education and training from 16+ who are keen to detect changes in the youth labour market and to consider their significance. Many now recognise that major shifts are taking place in a casualised youth labour market and wish to investigate the impact this might be having on participation, achievement and progression to further study.

An earlier study we undertook in South Gloucestershire (Hodgson & Spours, 2000) used more qualitative data as a way of exploring the increasingly important role that part-time work plays in the lives of 16-19 year olds as they stay on in education in greater numbers and also participate in the labour market. This study cast some light on student and staff attitudes to part-time paid work and speculated about the potentially positive and negative effects part-time work has on advanced level study.

This research by 15 Essex schools, supported by Essex LEA and the Institute of Education, represents a concerted local response to investigate this issue further. It was born out of real staff interest in and concern with the emerging issue of part-time work among full-time sixth form students. Teachers' concerns were related mainly to the effects of this type of work on A Level and GNVQ attainment and on sixth form students' commitment to advanced level study. In most cases their research is focused on these two issues.

On the whole, the findings of this research tend to support earlier work in this area and to add considerable texture to it. However, there is also significant new data here, particularly in relation to the views of parents and employers; the different attitudes and responses of young women and young men to advanced level study; the reasons why some young people do not work; and sixth form students' thoughts on the potential impact of *Curriculum 2000* on part-time employment.

How the studies were carried out

This new local research comprises 15 case studies with just under 1600 sixth formers in total surveyed through questionnaires and interviews (both group and individual) by heads of sixth and other colleagues in Essex schools with a professional interest in the issue of part-time work among full-time students. The type, size, ethos and location of schools varied widely. In all cases researchers were investigating the nature and extent of part-time work among full-time sixth formers in order to assess the impact of this new phenomenon both on their study patterns and on their attitude and motivation to study. The questions asked in each of the case studies varied but nearly always included whether students worked; how many hours they worked and at what points in the week; who employed them; why they worked and what effects they felt part-time work had on their study habits, commitment to further education and their lives as young people.

In addition, a number of case studies also explored the following:

- the correlation of hours of part-time work with predicted and actual performance in A Level and Advanced GNVQ;
- employers views on using sixth formers as employees;
- parental views about their children's part-time employment;
- students who do not work;
- the difference between the study and work patterns of girls and boys;
- rates of pay;
- student attitudes towards the potential effects of *Curriculum 2000* on work and study patterns.

Main findings

It is very difficult in a brief introduction of this sort to do full justice to the richness of the findings contained in the 15 case studies that make up this report. Inevitably many of the subtleties of the evidence are lost when trying to pull out key points. Nevertheless, there are some significant consistent messages to be found in all of the studies and it is both the weight of this evidence as well as the individual quality of each set of findings that we have tried to capture in what follows.

Patterns of part-time work amongst sixth form students

Part-time work plays a major part in the lives of sixth formers in Essex - on average over 80 per cent work (this is a slightly higher figure than the South Gloucestershire and FEDA studies) - although this figure differs between schools, with some reporting over 90 per cent of students working. What this indicates, however, is that part-time employment is seen as the norm for 16-19 year olds and part of what it means to be a sixth former. In fact, a couple of the studies suggest that those young people who do not work are seen as deviant, feel the need to justify why they do not work and even appear somewhat embarrassed by their position.

On average, students are employed between 10 and 15 hours and a significant number carry out paid work both on weekday evenings and at weekends. The majority work in retail or catering but there is a wide range of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs (eg farming, childcare) in which sixth formers are employed. Again these findings confirm evidence from earlier studies.

Attitudes to part-time work and differences of perception of teachers, students, parents and employers

One of the clearest messages which emerges from these studies, and again this has been highlighted in earlier research of this type, is that there is a big difference in teachers', students', parents' and employers' perceptions about the effects of part-time employment on 16-19 year olds' study patterns, commitment to study and achievement in advanced level qualifications. Education professionals, by and large, are very concerned about this issue and in particular how it is perceived to affect their students' commitment to study.

Young people, on the other hand, overwhelmingly see part-time work as both necessary and positive. When asked why they work, although the majority cite money as their first priority, students are keen to point out that part-time work makes them independent, develops skills, particularly social skills, which are not taught at school and is useful experience to include on a *curriculum vitae*. Students are very sanguine about managing the balance between work and study though they are not completely oblivious of its potential negative effects.

Parents, in the main, seem to encourage their children to take up part-time work in the sixth form and employers are eager to employ and invest in the training of bright sixth formers.

Effects of part-time work on achievement

Several of the Essex case studies attempt to examine whether there is a link between part-time employment and achievement in advanced level qualifications. Evidence from these studies is largely inconclusive. It tends to suggest that although some young people undertaking a high number of hours of part-time employment do appear to be jeopardising their attainment at A Level or Advanced Level GNVQ, this is not universally the case. Moreover, from the data collected so far there does not appear to be any evidence to support earlier local case studies which suggest that over 15 hours of part-time paid work has a detrimental effect on grade achievement in A Level. However, much of the research is based on students' predicted grades rather than their actual results in

national examinations. Several of the Heads of Sixth indicate a desire to investigate the link between part-time work and attainment further when this year's A Level and GNVQ results are published.

Patterns of study and part-time work

What is clear from several of the case studies is that students are undertaking considerably less independent study than they are recommended to do by their teachers and that they do not always use their independent study time in school effectively. On the other hand, many students claim that they work more efficiently and are more organised about doing their schoolwork because they have part-time jobs that take up a considerable amount of their time outside school.

One effect of part-time work on study, which both teachers and students recognise, although parents and employers are ignorant of this fact, is that part-time work has a negative effect on attendance and meeting deadlines for handing in assignments and coursework. A major question is whether these patterns of behaviour eventually affect levels of attainment? Logic suggests that they would.

One further disturbing finding which crops up in several of the case studies is that a minority of young people feel pressurised into undertaking extra hours of work at the employer's request because they feel reluctant to refuse. In some cases, young people feel that they risk losing their job if they do not accede to employer demands.

Gender differences amongst A Level students

Recent media attention has been focused on the fact that girls have improved their performance at A Level more swiftly than boys over the past few years and that, for the first time this year, girls have out-performed boys in the achievement of high grades. There has been considerable speculation as to the reasons for this trend. One of the interesting findings from a number of these case studies is that there is a difference between the number of hours that girls and boys spend on independent study for their A Levels. One of the schools discovered that on average girls spend five hours more per week studying for their A Levels outside the classroom and that on average they are employed for one hour per week less than their male classmates. The evidence suggests that girls are better organised than boys and are confident of being able to juggle multiple commitments. It would be premature to suggest that any of these factors is causally linked with achievement at A Level but there is certainly room for more research around this issue.

The balance between paid work, study and other aspects of sixth form life

The vast majority of the nearly 1600 young people surveyed as part of these 15 case studies in Essex schools is sanguine about their ability to juggle study and part-time employment. They feel that this type of lifestyle allows them the freedom to live a full life and to function as more independent young adults. Most appear to feel in control of their lives and to be prepared to put in considerable overall weekly workloads when part-time work and hours of study are added together. Students also indicate that they are not convinced by

teachers' arguments that this type of lifestyle will jeopardise their chances of academic success and many actively resent the school's interference in this issue. Blanket advice about the maximum number of hours it is recommended students should work is treated with some scepticism.

There is some indication, however, that students are prepared to listen to informed individual advice from tutors and, particularly, to the advice of their peers on this issue. This confirms a finding of previous studies. It is both interesting and instructive to read some of the advice which Year 13 students would give to Year 11 and 12 students about part-time employment. The central theme is finding the correct balance between work and study. What the students themselves stress is that this will vary according to the particular individual's programme, her/his ability and aspirations and may alter at examination times.

What is also telling about some of the qualitative data emerging from these case studies is just how much responsibility these young people feel for their own futures. There is a clear message - find the balance between work and study, establish your right to undertake this type of workload but don't whinge if it all goes wrong.

While the Essex studies break new ground, none of them examined in any detail the relationship between the rise in part-time employment and its potential effects on voluntary and community work, sport or help in the home. There were some students who gave sport or family commitments as reasons for not having any paid employment but these were a tiny minority. This is also an issue that needs further exploration.

Curriculum 2000 and larger programmes of study

From September 2000, as a result of the *Curriculum 2000* reforms, it appears that the majority of advanced level students will experience larger study programmes (Hodgson & Spours, 2000b). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that several of the case studies in this report attempted to gather information about whether the increase in study workload might result in students taking on less paid employment. Current advanced level students were asked whether they would reduce the amount of time they spent on part-time work if they had to study more subjects at advanced level. Just over half of the students surveyed thought that they would have to reduce their paid work. However, this still leaves a significant minority of students who do not feel this way. Again this is an area on which many of the Heads of Sixth recognised they would need to gather data next year.

Conclusions

These case studies largely confirm the findings of earlier studies in terms of patterns and amounts of part-time work. Upward of 80 per cent of full-time post-16 students are working part-time and many work a significant number of hours. The studies also support earlier qualitative data about the reasons for young people undertaking part-time employment alongside their studies and young

people's sanguine views about their ability to balance work and study. Possibly more than previous studies, the Essex school-based research suggests the overwhelming importance of part-time work 16-19 year olds and how ingrained it has become in the social and cultural fabric of young people's lives. The research also highlights the lengths many young people will go to balance work, study and a social life. Many are working on study and paid employment well above a 40 hour level and some as many as 60 hours or more.

It may be the case that what it is to stay-on in full-time education and to be a sixth former has changed irrevocably. The majority of sixth formers no longer seem to be prepared to focus on largely study and extra-curricular activities. Students appear to want to forge new compromises between study and labour market activity and in doing so to put themselves under considerable pressure at this stage of their lives. These compromises and pressures have not been accepted or even fully recognised by teachers.

In particular, there is the pretence around the amount of independent study undertaken by A Level students. Five hours per week per subject of independent study seems to be what most teachers recommend, though feel powerless to enforce. Several of the case studies suggest that while girls are more diligent than boys in organising their time, virtually no-one adheres to this recommendation. In this context, it will be interesting to explore the effects of *Curriculum 2000* with its demands for increased volume of study. In some senses, these reforms can be seen as an attempt by both government and education providers to reimpose a stricter study regime for those studying for advanced level qualifications. The *Curriculum 2000* reforms will, undoubtedly, chafe against the new culture of work and study compromise.

The inconclusive evidence regarding the impact of part-time work on examination attainment is of particular interest. In several of the case studies both teachers and students recognise that part-time work can have a negative effect on study habits (eg meeting course-work deadlines). However, these case studies have not found a direct correlation between the number of hours worked and young people's level of attainment in A Levels, which had been suggested in other local studies (Howard, 1999) and in research undertaken by the A Level Information Service (1999). However, there is evidence that high levels of part-time employment may be affecting the attainment of some young people. It will be important to explore who these young people are and if part-time work is the most significant factor in these cases.

The Essex case studies appear to support previous work (Hodgson and Spours, 2000a) which attempted to typologise young people in relation to their participation in study and in the labour market as 'excluded under-achievers'; 'discouraged workers'; 'busy aspirants'; 'educationally focused non-workers'; and

'higher education waverers'[1]. This form of categorisation is in response to the fact that different groups of learners may be handling the work and study compromises in different ways.

The sheer extent of part-time work undertaken by those in full-time 16-19 education makes it difficult to easily identify social class-based patterns.
Is this a class issue?

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[1] 1. *The excluded under-achiever* is often younger (eg 14-16) and would like to work part-time but cannot find a job. These students find themselves excluded from the part-time labour market because employers prefer to take on 16-19 year old students or less problematical young people. Moreover, these types of student, who often lack confidence or 'drive', are less likely to make a concerted effort to find part-time work. When they do obtain a job it is often the result of family connections, rather than through their efforts in an open labour market. The result is that many of the jobs these students have are confined to work on the margins of the labour market (eg baby-sitting). These students have low levels of commitment to both organised working life and to education.

2. *The discouraged worker* tends not to be committed to post-16 participation and has stayed-on because there was nothing else available at the time. This student is most likely to be found on post-16 Level 2 courses or doing a one or two A Level programme. The 'discouraged worker' sees part-time work as a possible *entree* into the labour market and may well be drawn out before s/he finishes her/his course and will certainly risk getting lower grades rather than jeopardise her/his part-time employment.

3. *The educationally-focused non-worker* does not work part-time because s/he wishes to focus solely on her/his studies and/or wider interests. These students decide not to take on a job because of a deliberate decision to work for high A Level or GNVQ grades and/or to pursue wider interests such as music, drama, sport or volunteering. These students are also often able to make this decision because their parents are willing to support them financially. By the age of 17, this type of student is in a small minority.

4. *The busy aspirant* works part-time but is also focused on her/his studies. In the 16-19 age group these students aspire to progress to higher education and tend to be clear about the type of grades required for entry to the university of their choice. They also tend to work limited hours (eg up to 10) in paid employment and usually confine these to holidays and weekends. This type of student can be seen to benefit from part-time work not only economically but also in terms of personal organisation (eg managing a busy working schedule) and wider social skills and experience. The 'busy aspirant' is usually prepared to accept advice about limiting part-time work in order to achieve the necessary grades (eg reducing her/his part-time hours near to examinations).

5. *The higher education waverer* participates in post-16 education on advanced level courses but is not dedicated to education progression. Typically, students in this category flirt with the idea of moving onto higher education but are prepared to wait and see how their grades turn out. At the same time, they are more likely than the 'busy aspirant' to take on a higher number of hours of part-time work and to work at times which are not conducive to meeting coursework demands. In doing so, they reduce the possibility of attaining the highest A Level grades and thus wider progression opportunities. The higher education waverer may be more likely to plan to take a 'year out' following her/his advanced level course to work full-time.

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Further research

While the 15 case studies broke new ground in the exploration of the relationship between part-time work and advanced level study, this is still a very under-researched area. The case studies raise as many questions as they answer. A number of areas require further exploration including:

1. Part-time work and A Level attainment.

2. The relationship between part-time work and advanced level study under *Curriculum 2000*.

3. Employer attitudes and roles, particularly in the light of *Curriculum 2000*.

4. The role of parents in relation to part-time work.

5. Gender issues in study and work-patterns.

6. The relationship between part-time work, employment and higher education.

7. The effects of part-time work on voluntary/community involvement, extra-curricular activities and help in the home.

8. The effects of part-time employment of able 16-19 year olds on less able and disadvantaged students wanting full-time employment/apprenticeships.

9. The effects of Educational Maintenance Allowances on the take-up of part-time work among 16-19 year olds in full-time study.

10. The impact of some of the strategies schools are putting into place to try to induce a better balance between work and study.

Case Studies

The Billericay School, Billericay

Brian Balchin

School context

The Billericay School is a large, co-educational comprehensive of some 1750 students. It is one of two state secondary schools serving the affluent town of Billericay.

The school is oversubscribed, with approximately one third of students coming from outside the catchment area, Basildon in particular. In national terms the students are of above average ability academically, with the five A*-C pass rate at GCSE approaching 60 per cent. There is generally strong parental support and a determination that their children achieve highly in academic terms.

The sixth form is among the largest in Essex, numbering close to 300 students. The majority of these follow A Level courses (25 subjects are offered) although there are also GNVQ courses in Business at both International and Advanced Levels. Two-thirds of Year 13 students continue their education post-A Level or GNVQ. The vast majority of these make applications through UCAS.

The research project

The main focus of this study is those students who do not have paid employment. I was particularly interested to see if they shared any common factors which differentiated them from 'workers'.

I used UCAS forms completed by Year 13 students to carry out an analysis into when the students began working, the number of jobs that they have held and the type of jobs they had engaged in. Other sections of the form and school records provided potential sources of background information on parental occupations and the academic achievements of the students to date.

This examination of documentary evidence was followed up by informal approaches to those students who appeared, from the evidence of the section asking for employment details, not to have had any paid employment up to the point at which the UCAS form was completed.

Research findings

The extent of part-time paid work

Of a total of 79 students surveyed, 72 were in part-time employment and only 7 had no work. Although I was very much aware that the majority of sixth formers both in my school and nationally worked part-time, I nevertheless found the percentage who had paid employment surprisingly high. This can perhaps be largely accounted for by the relatively easy availability of work in the area. As mentioned before, Billericay is a prosperous town and is close to densely populated areas where there are large leisure and retail complexes. Also, it would also probably be true to say that these sixth formers generally have a high level of social skills that make them attractive to employers.

When paid work began

In addition to identifying which students did not work, the UCAS form also furnished useful information on the point at which paid work was first undertaken by the majority of students.

When work began	Number of students	% of students
Pre-GCSE	27	34
Summer post-GCSE	16	20
First term Year 12	14	18
Second term Year 12	10	13
Third term Year 12	4	5
First term Year 13	1	1
No work	7	9

Of interest here is the fact that just over one third of students were already in paid employment before their GCSE exams began and that over half of them were working by the time they entered the sixth form. This provides another indication of the extent to which the obtaining of part-time work appears to be a natural progression for the majority of students either as soon as they reach the age of 16 or as soon as they finish their GCSE examinations.

Movement between jobs

From the UCAS form it was also possible to determine how often students had changed jobs and hence perhaps infer their level of satisfaction with, and commitment to, their work.

	Number of students	% of students
Students who had remained in the same employment throughout	39	52
Students who had changed jobs once	17	25
Students who moved jobs three times	16	23
Students moved jobs four or more times	0	0

The majority of students did not switch jobs, perhaps out of loyalty to their employer, contentment with the job or because paid work was not yet a sufficiently important part of their lives and was seen only as a means of providing for clothes, holidays and the fabric of their social lives.

The nature of the employment

Sector	Number of Students	% of students
Retail	58	48
Waiting, kitchen and bar work	23	19
Cleaning	19	16
Clerical	5	4
Other	16	13
Total	121	100

Not surprisingly some two thirds of all jobs were either in the retail or leisure industries. The relatively high number of students engaged in cleaning is accounted for by the fact that many are employed by the school to clean the school buildings.

Students without Employment

Introduction

There were a few of the 79 students who had had only a brief period or periods of employment (in one or two cases only two months or so in total), and so were no longer working. A very small number of others had recently stopped working after a relatively long period of work. For the purposes of this investigation these students were ignored and, in the interests of simplicity, the research was concentrated on those sixth formers who not only were not currently employed but never had been. There were seven such students.

Socio-economic background

There was no discernible common socio-economic background for the seven non-working students. None was from a particularly wealthy background and none gave not needing the money as a reason for her/his not working. In fact there were one or two members of the group from families where the additional money might have been very welcome.

Academic ability

Similarly, just as there was a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, so there was a considerable range of academic ability within this group. However, there was no similarity between the GCSE results of the seven non-workers and predicted A Level grades indicated possible As, Bs and those who might struggle to pass. None gave the desire or need to concentrate upon their academic work as a motive for not obtaining part-time employment.

Reasons given for not working

Two of the students who did no paid work had cogent and compelling reasons that meant seeking employment was not a practical possibility. Their circumstances made it virtually impossible. The other five advanced various explanations for their not working. These tended to be somewhat vague: *'I did look but nothing seem to turn up'; 'I never seemed to get around to it'; 'I would like a job and I'll probably get one after the exams'; 'I never seem to have had the time'.*

Attitudes displayed by the students to their lack of employment

One student seemed quite unconcerned by not being engaged in part-time work. What was most interesting, however, was that a number of the others were quite defensive and almost apologetic at their lack of employment. One student was quite assertive and forthright and seemed to see himself almost as a victim. Speaking of a new local venture that had taken on a considerable number of sixth-formers and to which he had applied unsuccessfully he said, using pretty blunt language, that they had seemed to have given jobs to everyone except him.

The others were far more reserved. They generally seemed to feel the need to offer an explanation for their not working, almost as if it were an abnormality and that their behaviour in this respect was somehow deviant. They certainly appeared to be acutely aware that they were in a small minority.

The personalities of these students

Although of course this is a totally subjective judgement, it did appear that many of these students (although not all) were quiet individuals, generally introverted rather than extrovert and rather lacking in self-confidence. This may of course have been a contributory factor in their not having sought, or not having been successful in seeking, employment.

Conclusions and lessons for the school

It is patently obvious that part-time employment is now the absolute norm for sixth form students in this school. It is as much an ingrained part of their lives as their academic work or their social activities. Those who do not work largely see themselves as deviating from this norm and are frequently embarrassed by the fact. It would seem pointless and absolutely unproductive for the school (assuming that it wished to do so) to attempt to persuade students not to undertake or to give up, paid employment in the interests of their academic programmes of study. Paid work is so woven into the fabric of their lives that one might just as easily attempt to persuade them not to have boy- or girlfriends.

Work also seems to have positive benefits: as well as the obvious material benefits - enabling them to save for the purchase of cars, to go on holiday and to buy clothes - it also creates a social bond, giving them another common experience about which to talk. Those students who did not work are largely excluded from these beneficial effects.

If work is seen as a hindrance to academic progress all that can be reasonably attempted is to present sixth-formers with logical arguments for limiting the hours worked and keeping them within sensible bounds.

The John Bramston School, Witham

Phil Newbury

School context

The John Bramston School is a mixed comprehensive (11-18) which has just returned to the LEA fold after being Grant Maintained. It has a total of 1000 pupils (130 in the sixth form) and 50 full-time teaching staff. Witham itself has a population of 25,000 and expanded greatly in the 1970s with the London overspill projects. The catchment area for John Bramston is quite diverse ranging from poorer council estates to fairly affluent, new private estates. There are 17 students who have statements of SEN maintained by an LEA and 236 students who have SEN with no statements. One hundred and seventeen students are entitled to receive free school meals.

In the sixth form 19 A Level subjects, 5 GNVQ Advanced courses and 2 GNVQ Intermediate courses are offered. This results in two-thirds of the students studying at A Level with, historically about 65 per cent of students in Year 13 going on to university. All A Level students also follow a general studies programme.

The research

All A Level and GNVQ Advanced students were given a questionnaire by their tutors. A total of 54 responses were received from a possible 130 with 39/65 from year 12 and 15/65 from years 13 and 14. (This is low because many students were either revising for exams, on arranged trips on that particular day or the replies were misplaced by one tutor.)

These are the results of a survey carried out at The Witham Sixth Form Centre in May 1999.

Student study patterns

I began by asking how much taught time they had and how much time they spent studying outside school each week.

Group		No.	Av lesson time (hrs)	Home study hours
Male	12A	9	16.5	13.7
	12 GNVQ	6	15.5	6.2
Female	12 A	18	16.5	11.3
	12 GNVQ	6	15	11.1
Male	13A	6	17	11.6
	13 GNVQ	2	15.5	9.1
Female	13A	5	17	13.7
	13 GNVQ	2	15	11.4

The taught time is out of 25 hours per week so the amount of non-contact time ranges between 8-10 hours.

Each A Level course is approximately nine hours per fortnight and students are encouraged to study for at least a further five hours per week per subject totalling 15 hours.

GNVQ students have an average of 11 hours per week and they are encouraged to match this each week in private study.

A number of GNVQ students also take one A Level although this statistic was not catered for.

The GNVQ Home study hours are generally lower than A Levels mainly because a number of students stated that much of their coursework needed to be word processed and they could only do this at school.

Employment (hours)

I asked whether they worked, how many hours they worked for and when they worked.

Group	No	Employed	Not employed	Max	Min	Av.
Male 12 A	9	6	3	20	8	14
12 GNVQ	6	3	3	18	15	16
Female 12 A	18	16	2	14	4	7.5
12 GNVQ	6	5	1	24	12	14
Male 13 A	6	5	1	15	3	8
13 GNVQ	2	2	0	24	8	16
Female 13 A	5	4	1	15	8	11
13 GNVQ	2	2	0	15	15	15
TOTAL	54	43	11	24	3	12.5

The employment rate is high because of local sports centre attached to the school, easy access to Chelmsford and Colchester (A12) and the opening of a new supermarket and fast food outlet.

The sixth form asks parents to sign a contract stating that their child will not undertake in excess of 12 hours of work per week. In addition to this there are formal registrations at the beginning and end of the day which helps to reduce students beginning shifts before the end of school.

Most students adhere to these requirements although the table shows that a number of students exceed the suggested school maximum of 12 hours and the GNVQ figures are particularly high.

Type of employment

Category	Year 12	Year 13	Total
Supermarket	6	3	9
Retailing	11	3	14
Catering	8	2	10
Clerical	1	3	4
Sports/recreational	2	2	4
Personal	2	0	2

The high employment rate is due to easy access to major towns and recent local developments and this is reflected in the high number of students who either work in retail or catering. However, there is a slight misrepresentation here as many more students actually work at a local supermarket.

When students work

When	Yr12 Male	Yr12 Fem.	Yr13 Male	Yr13 Fem.	Total
Weekdays only	0	2	2	0	4
Weekends only	4	10	2	2	18
Both	5	9	3	4	21
					43

Almost half of the students who responded disturb their study in the week at some point by working. However, almost as many students work at weekends only. One respondent worked every night of the week and at weekends.

Year 13 exam attitudes

I added a final question for year 13 students which asked, *'Have you either stopped working or reduced your hours because of exam/study pressure?'*

Sex	Yes	No
Male	3	4
Female	5	1

The responses could reveal that:

- females are more aware of the effects that work has upon study and therefore decided to stop;
- males are more driven by instant money and blow the consequences;
- males can maintain both work and study no matter what the pressure? (Only the exam results will tell!)

Conclusions

In addition to the points raised in the previous section the following conclusions may be drawn. First, the lure of money now is too great for students to resist. They need cash to finance their lifestyles – a car, fashionable clothes and drinking/clubbing and this is of paramount importance. If they can balance the two so much the better but they certainly do not want to be 'a poor student'.

Many of our students going on to Higher Education will study locally as it is cheaper to live at home, they can keep their part-time jobs and they want to maintain their present social grouping and lifestyle.

Many of the students need to work as their parents will not provide them with the extra cash life in the present day requires or they just want to be independent and not a burden to their family.

The effects of part-time work on A Level/GNVQ performance

After the completion of last year's study, I collected information about where year 13/14 students worked. In my role as Head of Sixth Form and A Level English teacher, I advised many students about when to reduce/stop work in relation to their increased periods of revision.

However, rather than look at the type of work they did and the hours they worked (most worked between 10-20 hours) I decided to concentrate this year on the effects on performance of working and not working.

My results are based on 42 A Level/GNVQ students (all our GNVQ students also took one A Level course).

Students working	Students not working
22	20

Rather than look at the students' grades I decided a fairer reflection would be to look at the students' value added totals and I therefore used REVIS.

This system is based on the standard A Level and GNVQ grades/points system:

A Level - A=10, B=8, C=6, D=4, E=2
GNVQ (Advanced) - Distinction = 18, Merit = 12, Pass = 6

REVIS student totals

Positive Revis total	Negative REVIS total	Neutral REVIS total
26	15	1

Even these initial totals suggest that work does not necessarily prevent students from achieving.

Results of all students working/not working

Category	Students	REVIS Total	REVIS Av
Worked	22	+74	+3.4
Did Not Work	20	+38	+1.9

Therefore, overall the students who worked outperformed those who did not work by 1.5 points (almost one whole grade).

Students obtaining positive REVIS scores

The positive REVIS scores ranged from 1–15 with the overall position being as follows:

No of Students	Worked	Did not work	Points total	Points Av
26	15	11	172	6.61

This reveals that almost 60 per cent of the students who achieved a positive REVIS score worked. This data can then be broken down into two further categories, those who worked and those who did not.

Category	Students	REVIS Total	REVIS Av
Worked	15	+102	+6.80
Did Not Work	11	+70	+6.36

Rather surprisingly, the students who did work achieved a slightly better REVIS score than those who did not. However, several of the students who worked did reduce their hours after the Easter holiday although they did not actually stop working.

Students obtaining negative REVIS totals

The negative REVIS totals ranged from –1 to -8

No of Students	Worked	Did not work	Points total	Points Av
15	6	9	-60	-4.00

Once again this can be split into the two further categories of worked and did not work.

Category	Students	REVIS Total	REVIS Ave.
Worked	6	-28	-4.66
Did Not Work	9	-32	-3.56

In this category the students who worked underachieved compared to their peers who did not work by more than half a grade.

Higher education entry

Category	Higher Ed	Local Study	Distanced
Worked	11	7	4
Did Not Work	12	7	5

The number of students entering higher education is declining and of those who do more decide to study locally.

Conclusions

- The demands of part-time work, whilst having a negative effect on those students who need to concentrate on their studies to achieve their potential, does not affect those certain students who seem to be able to 'juggle' their time.

- There was no real correlation between part-time work (even with those students who worked for more than ten hours) and a lack of success. Indeed four students who worked achieved Revis scores of between +12 and +14.5 and two students who did not work obtained REVIS scores of –7 and –8.

- Students should not necessarily be discouraged from working although each individual student's situation would need to be analysed in order to advise them about the number of hours they can work before the negative effect sets in.

- It is becoming an increasingly popular choice for students who go on to higher education to choose an establishment close to home in order that they can continue living in the family home and retain their part-time employment so as not to incur sizeable debts.

Further action by school

1. In the light of the demands of *Curriculum 2000*, with students taking an increased number of subjects in Year 12, students who work will need to be counselled about the hours they work (although we do already have a work contract that students must sign).

2. Increased input with regard to the long-term importance (especially graduate earning potential) of higher education study will need to be undertaken in sixth form tutorials.

Further research

A further analysis of this year's A Level and GNVQ students will be undertaken to see if the trends mentioned earlier continue to develop.

Chelmer Valley High School, Broomfield

Jim Aylen-Smith

School context

Chelmer Valley High School is located in Broomfield near Chelmsford. In April 1998 following strong parental support the school became Grant Maintained. OFSTED and the DfEE have recently chosen Chelmer Valley as a national example of good practice in target setting and value-added for raising student achievement.

Students come to the school from a wide rural area with many arriving on buses or by private transport. The catchment area is mixed and there are two selective grammar schools as neighbours. The school has recently invested £500,000 on the fabric of the school which includes new sixth form accommodation. The school roll is currently just over 1,000 students including 160 sixth formers.

The research project

The main aim of the research was to ascertain whether there was a connection between a student's choice of university, college or employment and their present part-time work. This area of concern started after feedback from a tutors' meeting. A general comment that arose at regular intervals during tutor meetings was that students stated that certain companies would allow them to relocate their part-time jobs to the town of their chosen university or college. It was also known that approximately 80-90 per cent of the students had part-time employment, with a higher percentage in vocational subjects. The majority of those without employment were considering finding work at some stage.

The research question was, therefore, *'Has part-time employment influenced students' choice of university or college?'*

The research was designed to see whether there was a link between students taking up further education or employment opportunities and their involvement in part time work. Questionnaires and interviews were used with employers and students (see Appendix 1). Four major employers were interviewed - Halfords, Debenhams, Sainsburys and Asda. Each of the companies were local and had students from the school as employees.

Thirty six students of mixed gender were interviewed from both year 12 and 13.

Research findings

Employers survey results

All employers interviewed actively recruit A Level students using methods such as open days and bulletins in staff rooms. Every company contacted other stores within their group to help student workers reallocate.

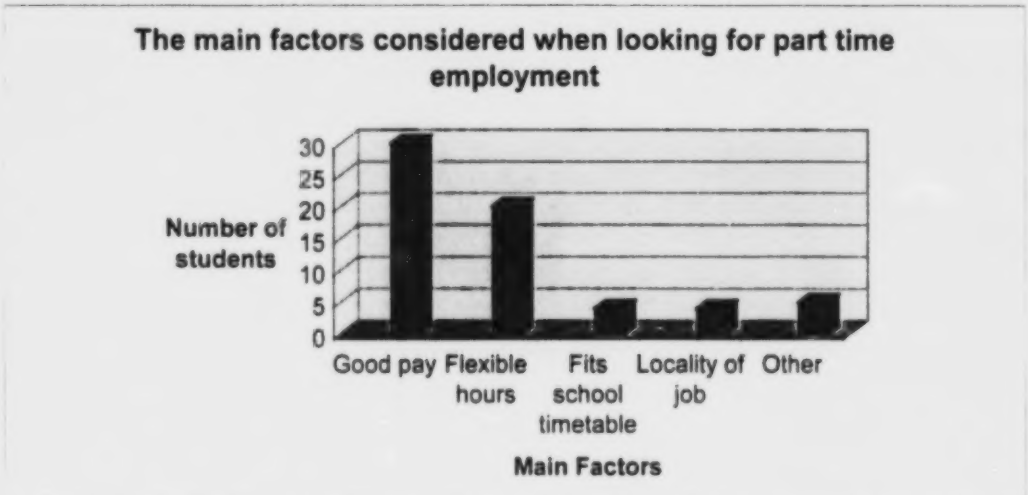
Sainsburys has a 'Dual Contract', which allows students the freedom to move from store to store without red tape. Asda has a student database where student details are held for other stores and where students can look for work. All stores have training programmes to cover Health and Safety Regulations. This obviously represents a financial commitment by the company because as students rotate around departments, the cost per head increases. This was especially so in the food departments.

All the companies are aware that students take up part-time work as a precursor to applying for full-time employment with them; this was particularly the case with accounts and retail management. It was also clear that students picked 'blue chip' in order to gain good references.

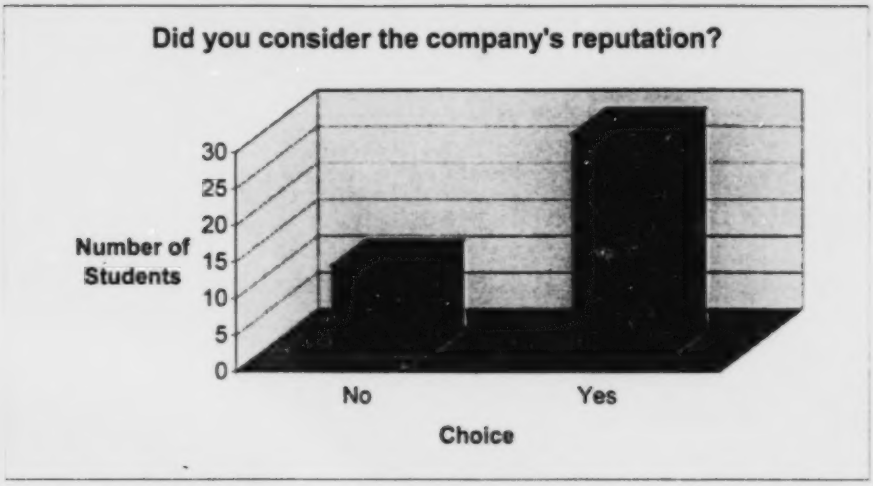
Every company surveyed provides management training and prefers A Level students who have completed in-store training to employing graduates.

Debenhams only allows students to start in-house training in accounts or management after 12 months service. In these cases, all training gives access to national qualifications, normally undertaken on day-release or sponsorship schemes.

Student survey results

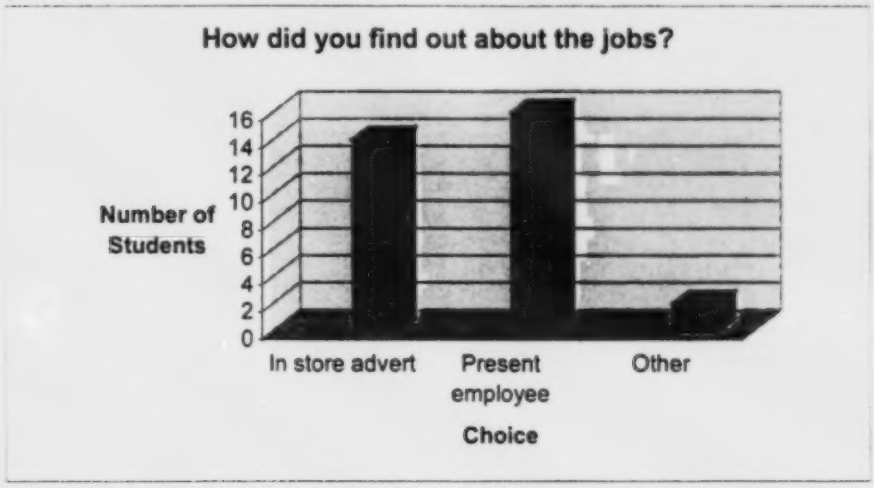


The students showed a good knowledge of pay scales between local companies and identified companies that had flexible working hours.

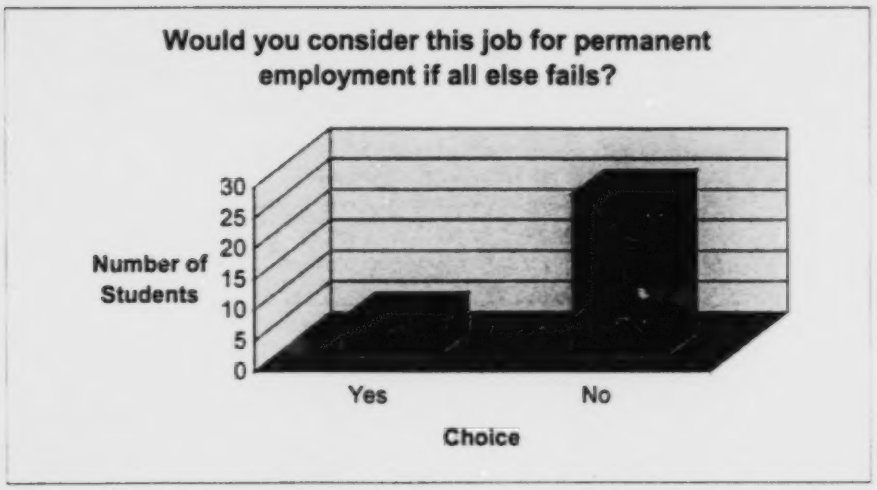


A major factor in their choice was the need for a good reference and CV.

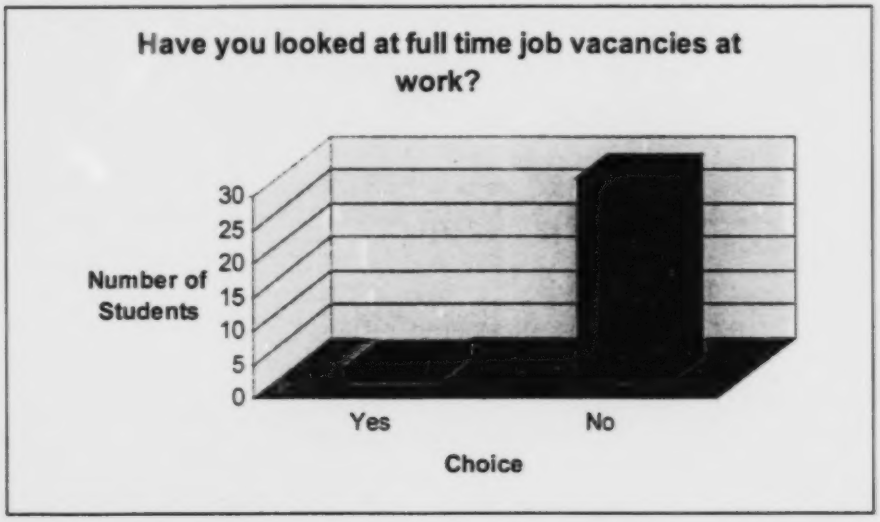
There was also the perk of in-store discounts.



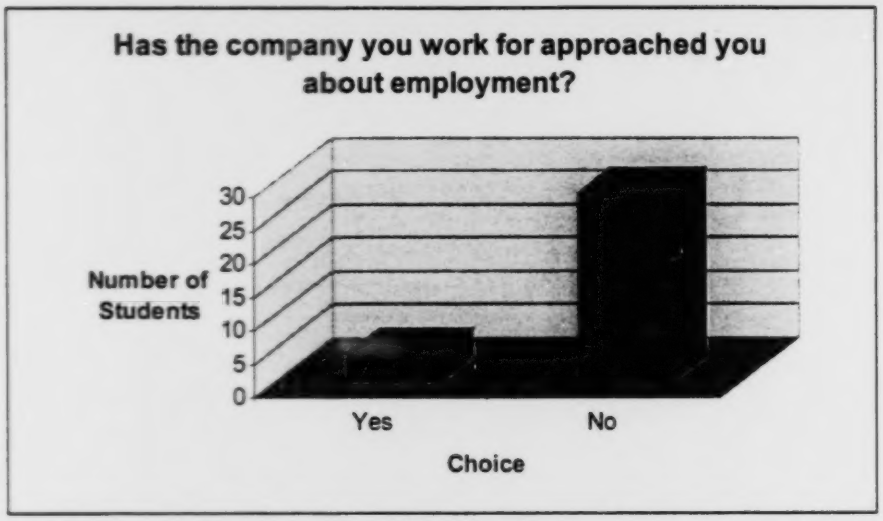
The majority of students found out about jobs through their friends, one found his job through the local job centre.



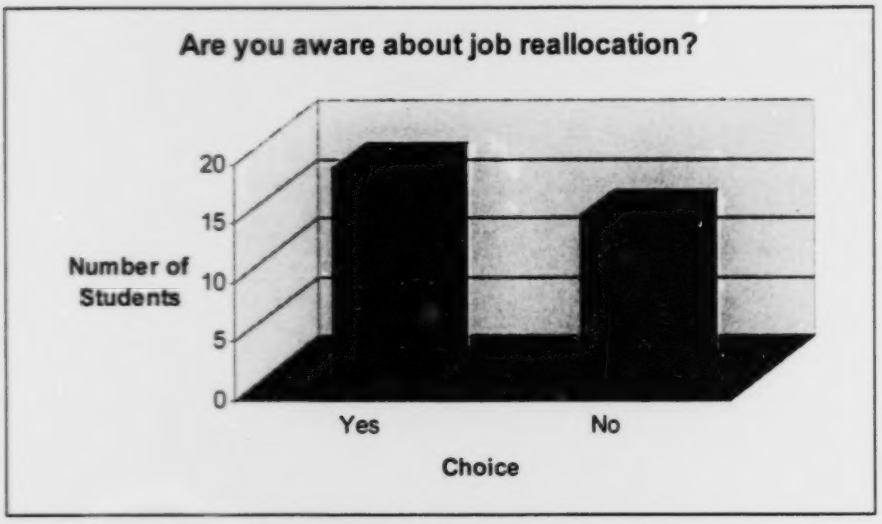
A lot of students considered that taking up their part-time job as permanent employment would be admitting defeat and considered their part-time employment as a temporary situation.



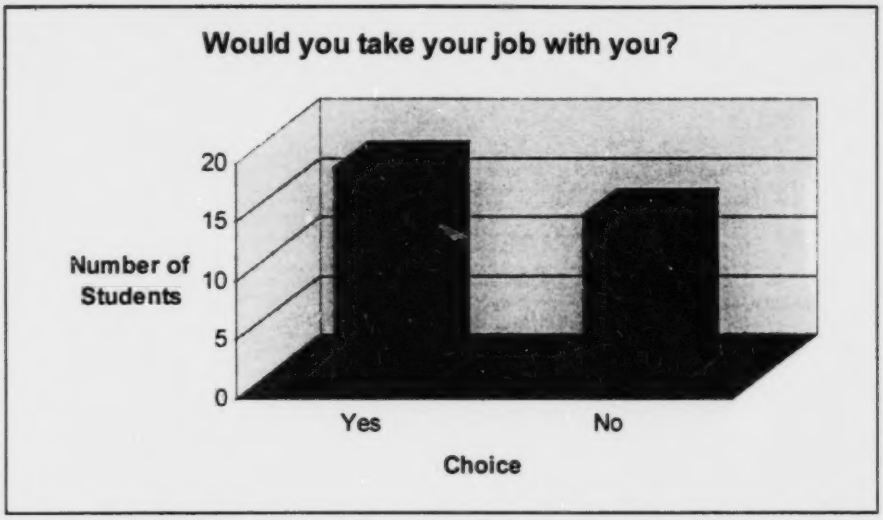
Only two students had considered looking at the permanent job vacancies in the company in which they were presently employed part-time.



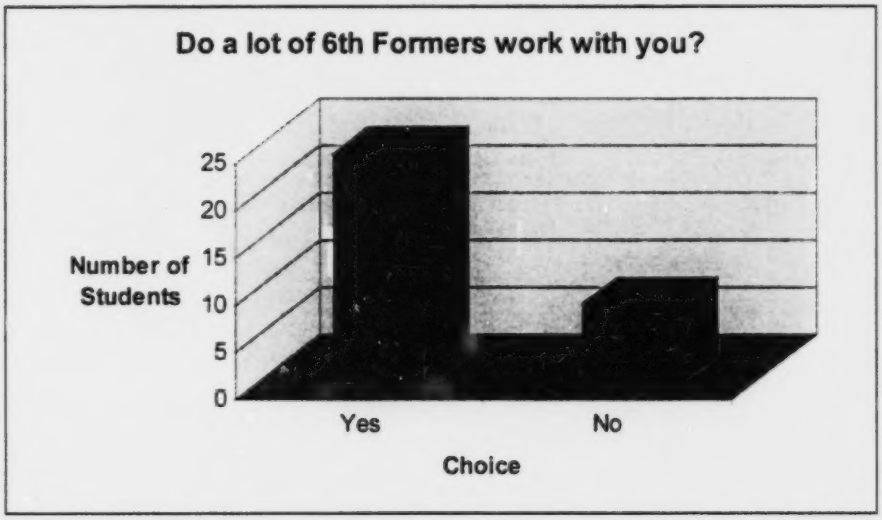
Four students had been approached about taking up permanent employment in the company in which they currently worked part-time; three of them worked at the same place.



Students' awareness about possible job relocation mainly came from information given to them by friends.

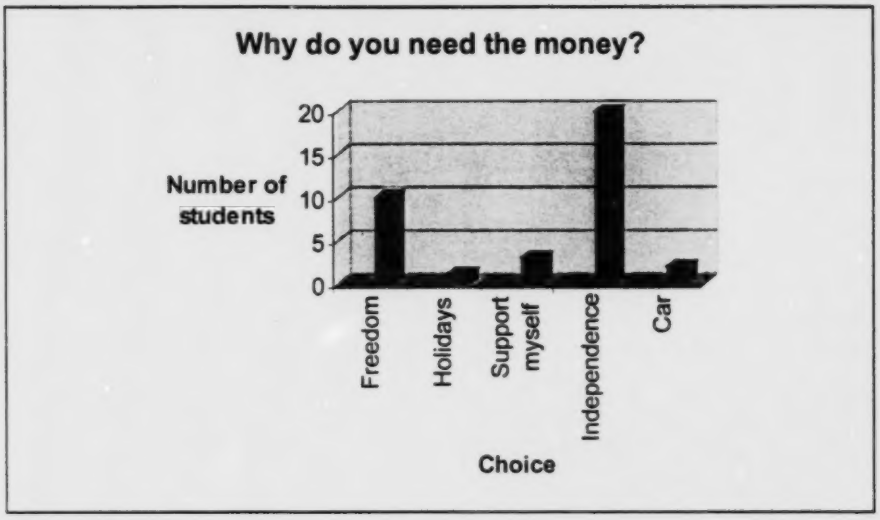


The majority of students were keen to continue working part-time with the same employer when they moved into further or higher education.



Most respondents pointed out that they worked with a large number of their sixth form colleagues and one student commented that during the late shifts, the store was practically run by students.

One hundred per cent of respondents said that they took on part-time employment because they really needed the money although their responses regarding what they needed the money for varied.



Summary of survey findings

The employers' survey showed that employers were keen to recruit full-time employees from their part time student workforce partly because they had invested in training costs and partly because they had a good working knowledge of a student. Employers claimed that they felt that their role was to support their student work-force in gaining employment.

Overall, it appeared from responses to questionnaires and interviews that both employers and students working part-time benefit from current flexible employment practice. The students were aware of their value within the current labour market and used this to their advantage: their ability to work unsociable hours possibly reaps them high pay rates. They were also keen to use their part-time jobs for their own personal agenda - gaining references, long-term work experience and, if necessary, short-term security.

The main message from the students is that part-time work allows them to gain independence from the family and gives them a particular status in society. There is a clear pressure on the minority of non-workers to get a part time job at some point.

Implications for action

- The school needs to consider giving advice on part time employment, outlining the options available to students.
- Certain employers could be targeted and asked to provide information on their training schemes and provision for student workers.
- Current legislation on part-time employment needs to be made available to students possibly as part of the sixth form introduction pack.
- Information on current pay scales and local employers with good records needs to be passed on by previous students.
- Job vacancies could be advertised.

It is clear that the school has to understand the students' needs more with reference to their need for financial independence and support in further education.

Areas meriting further research

There are areas that now need clarification so that action can be considered.

- Have past students needed to find or keep employment to fund further educational studies after they have left school?
- Has the availability of part-time employment had an affect on students from low-income families and is employment a requirement to remain in the educational system after GCSEs?
- Are students only going to consider local universities and colleges due to costs?
- Will students not attempt to apply to universities and colleges in more remote parts of the country where there is a lack of employment?

The research could take many different directions. What I feel is important is the link between students' social backgrounds and their ability to both work and study.

Clacton County High School, Clacton-on-Sea

Peter Wakeford

School context

Clacton County High School is an above average size mixed comprehensive with 1439 pupils drawn from Holland-on-Sea, East and Central Clacton and St Osyth. It has a sixth form of 163 with 67 in Year 13, 67 Year 12 two-year students and 29 GNVQ Intermediate students. The school offers a wide range of A Levels, Advanced and Intermediate Level GNVQs in Business and Health & Social Care. Leisure & Tourism is offered at Intermediate Level only. Between 30 and 40 per cent of each cohort proceeds to higher education. Average A Level point scores are below the national average.

The research project

This study set out to analyse student motives for undertaking part-time work and to assess its impact on attitudes to study, with a view to refining induction and counselling of future students and their parents.

Questionnaires were issued to a majority of students and to some parents via a Parents' Evening. I also undertook focus groups discussions based on students of different age and attainment.

Research findings

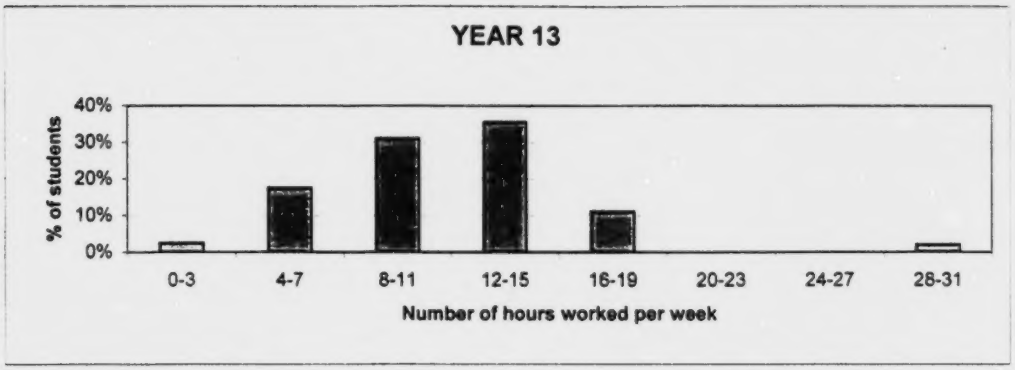
Of the 57 Year 13 students who responded to the questionnaire a total of 53 work. Three of the four non-workers would work given suitable opportunity. Only one does not work for school-related reasons.

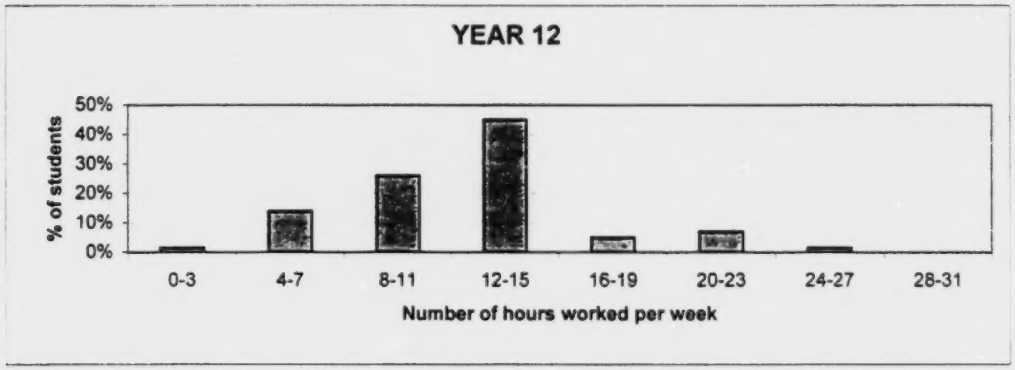
Of the 83 Year 12 students who responded to the questionnaire a total of 58 work. Of the 25 non-workers, 11 are actively seeking work and nine cite school-related reasons for not working.

Type of work

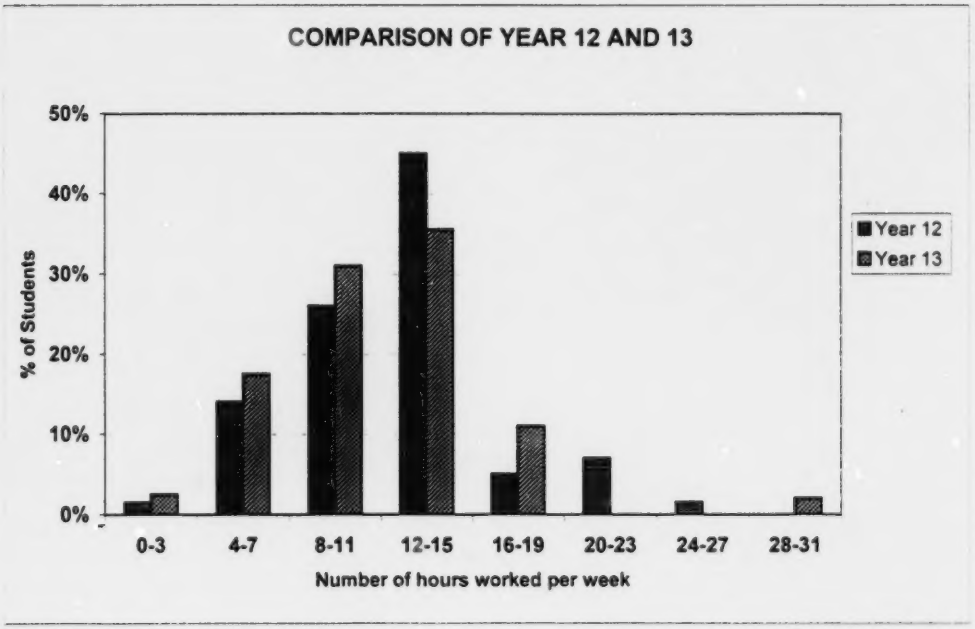
The work undertaken is dominated by retail (Year 13 – 61 per cent and Year 12 65 per cent) while food outlets account for ten per cent and 19 per cent respectively. Lifeguards, cleaners, care and secretarial work were small minority pursuits.

Hours worked





The Year 13 figures show that nearly 50 per cent are exceeding 12 hours per week with less than one and a half terms to go until the end of their courses.



There is a majority of those working in Year 12 who exceed 12 hours, partly explained by there being a greater willingness to undertake seasonal work than is apparent in Year 13.

Patterns of working

What I found from the responses to the questionnaires was that the traditional 'Saturday Job' was a model followed by only a small minority in Year 13 (13 per cent) but a slightly larger group in Year 12 (16 per cent).

	Year 13	Year 12
Late Afternoon only	2%	4%
Weekday Evenings only	7.5%	7%
Weekday Evening and one Weekend Day	34%	28%
Weekday Evening and two Weekend Days	7.5%	26%
One Weekend Day	13%	15%
Two Weekend Days	36%	20%

Analysis of attainment in modules/final examinations for both years may produce some patterns which are more conducive to success than others, and if such links are established this would form part of the induction of new students into the sixth form.

Wages per hour

£	Year 13	Year 12
2-3	7.5%	38%
3-4	75%	53.5%
4-5	12%	7%
5+	5.5%	1.5%

The disparities between wages for Years 12 and 13 are largely explicable by age differences and the seasonal work done by more students in Year 12.

Reasons for working

Students were given a wide range of choices and were asked to prioritise their reasons. Not all were able to do this; hence statistical reliability may be lower than for other sections.

Priority Choice	Year 13			Year 12		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Social Life	57%	21%	10%	45%	19%	19%
Spending	23%	53%	20%	42%	46.5%	9%
Help family	-	-	6%	1.5%	5%	4.5%
Save for higher education	10%	13%	19%	4.5%	12%	15%
Gain experience for career	4%	2%	13%	3%	7.5%	4.5%
Finance driving lessons	2%	7%	32%	3%	7.5%	48%
Other - buying Car	-	2%	-	-	-	-
- saving for house	2%	-	-	-	-	-
- general savings	-	2%	-	-	3%	-
- travel to school	2%	-	-	-	-	-
- sport	-	-	-	1.5%	-	-

As might be expected priorities do vary between the two years, with deferment of gratification being notably absent in both years. Interestingly, saving for higher education is a lower priority than I expected in Year 13 with only 21 of the total of 30 applicants mentioning it as a reason for working and of them only five saw it as their most important reason for working.

If anything, the impact of part-time work per se may be less upon academic performance than the ability it gives students to socialise more often with its attendant effects on brain cell count and ability to get up on time.

Distribution of time

This section caused most problems in obtaining trustworthy data, largely based on variations between weeks and, in some cases, the impossibility of quantifying large amounts of time spent socialising. Regardless of the limitations the following conclusions were possible.

	Year 13	Year 12
More hours spent socialising than studying	38%	33%
Equal hours spent on each	15%	19%
More hours spent studying than socialising	34%	31%
Not known	13%	7%

Almost invariably, hours were extended during holidays but owing to the unpredictable nature of the requests which would be made most students were unable to give specific hours.

Results from focus group sessions

Having gleaned the raw data I then held three focus group sessions with:

a)	Successful students (achieving and exceeding Target Minimum Grades TMGs) in Year 13	4 students
b)	Less-successful students in Year 13	5 students
c)	A cross-section of students in Year 12	4 students

Successful Year 13 student responses to focus group interviews on their views about part-time work and study

1. Staff attitudes were not a problem for them. One tutor stressed *'Don't do over eight hours'*, while others simply say, *'Don't over-stretch yourself'*.

2. All reported positive results from working. *'It helped me write a better Personal Statement'*, *'My boss will act as a referee'*, and the relationships with customers and other adult staff have increased student confidence and have made them more willing to raise issues at school which they might be unhappy about. This 'empowerment' was recognised as a definite advantage by the majority. For most the drudgery of their job was a powerful motivation for serious study, *'I would never want to do the job I'm doing now for very long'*.

3. Only one had experienced pressure personally and her company appraisals cover flexibility so she was keen not to let herself down. All others had complete flexibility over hours and timings. They all accepted it depended on the employer, but didn't know of peers who were pressured. 'People work as much or as little as they want to,' was the common theme.

4. a) When students were asked *'If you were offered extra hours and you knew you would not be able to hand in an assignment on time, what would you do?'*, one admitted that he had negotiated extensions with some staff on occasions. The rest said they hadn't and wouldn't. *'We know how much time we have. If we worked more something else would go, but not school work.'*

   b) When asked what would you do if you were revising for a modular exam, one responded that he/she had temporarily given up work entirely at one point in Year 12 with module resits. The rest would not accept any extra hours near pressure points.

5. a) All would go to work (and often do) with a hangover. *'It's hard, but you have a responsibility not to let the others down.' 'It's not fair, others might do it but I don't.'*

   b) When students were asked would you go into school with a bad hangover, students said that ideally they would come to school but it *'Would depend on the teacher and the lesson'*. This was a unanimous response.

6. All students agreed that compared with Year 12 their studies were more important now. Most were working no fewer hours, but their focus on study and management of other time was sharper. *'I can work for money for the rest of my life but I can only do A Levels now'*, was a typical (if erroneous) response. One had recently given up her job as the final hurdle approached. She had found her performance had improved.

7. When students were asked to advise Year 11 and 12 students about managing part-time work, they responded *'You have to do what suits you'*. However, all stressed the need for balance between school, job and social life. *'Don't burn yourself out by trying to do assignments late at night. You get tired, your grades drop.'* Notwithstanding differing metabolisms this seemed very sensible.

8. On reflection, all the students said they have managed their time better *'You have to make sacrifices, you can't do it all'*, was the general view. *'Don't whine, choose!'*, was the favoured epithet.

9. When students were asked *'if your results don't live up to what you are predicted to get, is your experience at school or the demands of your job more likely to be the cause?'* no one was prepared to blame the job for underachievement, merely themselves for having chosen to do it. Some poor teachers in Year 12 were also cited by one.

Less successful Year 13 student responses to focus group interviews on their views about part-time work and study

1. None had experienced teachers expressing concern about jobs, except one in general terms.

2. Benefits from work included following orders (interestingly something the student in question does not apply to assignments in school!), team work, transferable skills of being responsible for money and communication skills. One student kept school and work as separate as possible and, unlike both other groups, none saw work as relaxation compared with school. *'My job's different but it's not relaxing'*. No benefits to study had accrued from working. None of them felt better at managing their own finances than before, though being paid monthly exerted a powerful discipline over budgeting. One only bought *'worthwhile things I really need'*, and didn't waste it.

3. Two had experienced pressure to work more hours. One had been told that he would let the team down if he didn't and the other is always pressed for reasons if he turns hours down and they say he will be doing them a big favour if he can work. He is often asked to work extra every week. The others had full choice about when they worked and did not know of other instances of pressure. *'It's a personal decision how much or little you work'*, was the norm. One student had found it impossible to change when he worked to assist his studies despite being a long-standing employee. This illustrates the inflexibility of some employers.

4. When students were asked *'If you were offered extra hours and you knew you would not be able to hand in an assignment on time, what would you do?', they* gave a variety of responses: *'I would always do the assignment,'* (though he was one of those who had been subjected to pressure). *'I would try to do both, but if I failed I would call in sick.' 'I would try to do both and if I failed I would negotiate an extension with my teacher.'* For one, the hours are decided a month in advance and if something came up at school she would try to renegotiate the day ie Saturday instead of Sunday.

When asked what would you do if you were revising for a modular exam, one had swapped days to keep Sunday free for final module revision and one had reduced hours. Another had taken time off work before coursework deadlines.

5. a) Asked what they would do if they had a hangover and were expected to go into work, one said: *'Hangovers are hated at work and you're sent home.'* The others go in and suffer.

   b) All would come to school if they woke up with a hangover, with one exception, but the reasons were scarcely positive, *'I'd be here in body', 'My mum would force me to come',* and *'I wouldn't get a lift so I have to come.'* For one it depended on the pattern of the day. If Periods 1 and 2 were the only lessons of the day he would come in. If it was a full day he might miss the first two and come in late.

6. All were overwhelmingly committed to their studies, though assessments over the past 18 months might undermine this assertion! One's attitude to his job was unchanged, *'It's something I just do for money',* while the others were more focused on study than in Year 12. For the least successful students there seemed difficulty in analysing their own relative values to jobs and school, as if both were done without much conscious thought and choice.

7. In response to the question: *'If you were asked to advise Year 12/11 students about managing part-time work, what would be the key issues,'* useful but sometimes contradictory messages for Year 12 were given:

- *'Don't over-commit yourself. See how it goes as you can always increase your hours.'*
- *'Work for a big firm. They find it easier to get people in to replace you so you get more chance to choose.'* But one had been conned on what wages were owed more than once, so vigilance is needed. But another disliked larger firms saying, *'You're less of an individual. The manager has to stick to a policy and there's no flexibility.'*
- *'Avoid hard, physical jobs and don't work late nights or early mornings.'*
- *'You have to make some sacrifices – watch less TV, go out less.'*
- All agreed that work in the week or week and weekend were very disruptive and suggested just weekend work, and that stressing the long term benefits of study would help.

8. When asked to reflect on how they could have managed the balance between study and work better, students gave the following responses. One had originally worked in the week but changed as both school and social life were affected. One had added a quiet evening in the week to the weekend work as it was money for nothing. Another admitted that in Year 12 his job had taken control but that he had got the balance right now. One had stopped working Saturdays to have a break from work!

9. All would blame themselves if results slipped. It was their decision when and how much they worked.

A cross-section of Year 12 student responses to focus group interviews on their views about part-time work and study

1. One teacher had advised not working in Year 13 and a Deputy Head had complained about inadequate effort put into coursework, linking it to *'other activities'*. Three of the group were already thinking of cutting down their hours in Year 13.

2. These students gave the same responses as the other groups, although they appeared to have a greater appreciation of the value of money.

3. Only one had ever been asked to work more hours and that was only once. One said that the Leisure Centre in Clacton did insist you worked the hours allocated even if you didn't want them all.

4. a) When asked if there was a choice between extra hours or handing in an assignment on time, all said they would refuse the offer of extra hours. However, so far the situation had not arisen for any of them.

   b) Three said they would reduce hours of paid work when they had modular exams, but this was more likely to be in Year 13 rather than in Year 12.

5. a) All would work with a hangover.

   b) Four of the five (all male) said they would not come in to school with a hangover, as *'I wouldn't be able to concentrate so there's no point.'* The one female would come in.

6. All overwhelmingly see their studies as more important than their part-time work.

7. Overwhelmingly they would advise Year 11 students not to work weekday evenings. *'School work is fresher in your mind in the evening so it's easier to do assignments instead of waiting until the weekend.'*

8. So far each felt they had managed the job-study balance effectively and seemed aware of possible pitfalls. Most enjoyed work as relaxation from stress at school.

9. All would blame themselves for any underachievement.

Parental attitudes to part-time work

Data gleaned from about 20 parents at a Sixth Form Parents' Evening revealed some interesting and perturbing results. *'I think everyone should work at 16,'* and *'If the job was hitting his studies it would be up to him to decide if he was going to reduce his hours.'*

Implications for school action

1. The greater briefing of staff based on my own/national studies to encourage more consistency of advice from staff and tutors.

2. Dissemination of advice material for use in student induction and for parents. An informal code of practice based on the recommendations of current students to assist in the making of the least detrimental job choices.

3. The questionnaires suggest that the study ethic promoted by the school falls short of the ideal when the distribution of time is examined. Although jobs may fund out-of-school socialising, it is non-study time generally which is a concern. Again, more research and guidance will be needed. Supervised private study is desirable but is unlikely to occur.

4. Increase student, employer and tutor awareness of the need to record and quantify Key Skills experience in the workplace to improve references/CVs.

5. Mentoring by Year 13 of the Year 12 students to encourage the desirable balance and good study habits. This is in addition to the current tutorial programme.

6. The comments about the attitude of some firms to extra hours might make it desirable to contact local large companies to check on policies and to seek their co-operation with school in not over-demanding student hours.

There is still much to be done. The main lesson is that glib generalisations about school–work relationships are not helpful. The parent and employer dimensions seem well worth pursuing.

Further areas of research

1. The responses of the small sample of parents I surveyed about their sons'/daughters' involvement in part-time work proved interesting. It would be useful to survey and analyse a larger sample.

2. Examining the final results of the current Year 13 and module results from the Year 12 will give a possible indicator of impact on study. This will require more time and statistical expertise, which at present I don't possess!

Endnote: This study would not have been possible without the co-operation and honesty of all students involved. To all of them I wish to extend my gratitude.

Colbayns High School, Clacton-on-Sea

John Raynor

School context

Colbayns High School is a large comprehensive of about 1700 students with 190 in the sixth form. Students can take 18 A Levels and 4 Advanced GNVQ subjects on a two-year programme and four GNVQ Intermediate subjects on a one-year programme.

The research project

The aim of this research project was to find out more about patterns of part-time work among sixth form students. The original intention had been to interview all sixth form students and to get them to complete a questionnaire, but OFSTED intervened and affected preparation time. Nevertheless, 79 students out of 105 from Year 12 and 17 students out of 60 from Year 13 completed a questionnaire. The Year 13 results have been discounted but, since a large proportion of students from Year 12 completed the questionnaire, I examined these responses in detail. I have separated the students into those on two-year and those on one-year programmes.

Students on two-year programmes

Numbers working and types of employment

Of the 48 respondents on Advanced Programmes, 12 did not work (25 per cent) leaving 75 per cent involved in a variety of part-time jobs.

Type of employment	Percentage of those working
Retail	29
Supermarket	12.5
Restaurant/Pub	10.5
Fast Food	8.5
Sport/Leisure	2
Cleaning	2
Care Work	2
Other	8.5

Paid hours worked

Paid hours worked	Percentage of those working
0 – 9	17
10 –15	56
16 – 19	22
20 or more	5

From the total, 8 per cent of students worked in the weekdays only and 42 per cent worked at weekends and during the week, clearly therefore infringing upon their study time. A staggering 95 per cent said that they would still work during their exam period, further squeezing the time they could devote to revision. Furthermore, 60 per cent, when questioned about their attendance at work, remarked that it was very good. Many took pride in the fact that they had not missed a day's work. When matched against their school attendance it was clear that paid work took priority. When asked about the motives for having a job, all mentioned the financial motive, with other popular reasons being be experience – 45 per cent - and social - 19.5 per cent.

Total hours of study and part-time work

A total of 48 students were questioned about the total hours they devoted to schoolwork and paid work (i.e. school contact hours, study time and paid work).

Hours Worked	Percentage of those working
Less than 30 hours per week	10
31 – 40	23
41 – 50	32
51 – 59	25
60 hours or more	10

It is clear that the combination of school contact time, private study and paid work can lead to very high hours of working activity (65 per cent work more than 40 hours per week.

While some students are clearly mixing and matching school-work and paid work effectively and can meet deadlines, there are other students whose school work is suffering because of the excessive number of hours they are working.

Students on one-year programmes

Hours of paid work and types of jobs

Of the 31 Year 12 students all but four have jobs (i.e. 87 per cent).

Type of job	Percentage of those working
Retail	22.5
Supermarket	2.0
Restaurant/Pub	13.0
Fast Food	5.0
Sports/Leisure	0
Cleaning	2.5
Other	13

Hours of paid work

Hours Worked	Percentage of those working
0 – 9	37
10 – 15	44.5
16 – 19	7.5
20 or more	11.0

7.5 per cent of students only worked on weekdays, 48 per cent worked only at weekends and 44.5 per cent worked both weekends and in the week. A total of 96.5 per cent of students worked in their holidays and only 7.5 per cent of students would give up their jobs as exams approached – although the one-year course did not involve the same exam pressure as the two year A Level course. Once again all students expressed pride in their good attendance at work. This again is far higher than their attendance in school. With time permitting, a detailed analysis of school attendance will be followed up.

Similarly the main incentives for work proved to be financial (85 per cent) and experience (30 per cent).

Total hours of study and part-time work

A total of 31 students were questioned about the total hours they devoted to schoolwork and paid work (i.e. school contact hours, study time and paid work).

Hours Worked	Percentage of those working
Less than 30 hours	48.5
31 – 40	26
41 – 50	22.5
51 or more	3.0

This suggests that two-year A Level students are working in some capacity for longer than those students taking a one-year course. Taking both together however, many sixth formers are working excessive hours in total.

An interesting feature was that among the Advanced Level students 54 per cent had a contract while 46 per cent did not and among the one year students, 48 per cent had a contract and 52 per cent did not. Therefore, roughly half of the sixth formers working have a contract and half do not. One wonders if they are being exploited!

Employers are clearly prepared to offer extra hours to students in the sixth form if there are absences among other staff. Thus 92 per cent of two-year Advanced Level Students were offered and took up extra hours. A similar situation applied to the one-year sixth formers with 89 per cent being offered extra work and taking the offer up.

Future research

It is intended that the students from Advanced levels will be tracked for the rest of the course including their Year 12 exam, mock and final performance in Year 13. Similarly the one-year students will be monitored in terms of their completion rates. In future the job situation and hours Year 12 devote to life and work in Year 13 will be further examined.

Davenant Foundation School, Loughton

Elizabeth Moore

School context

The context for the pilot research is an 11-18 Christian Ecumenical Comprehensive Secondary School at which I presently teach. The school is unusual in that it has specific criteria for entrance which are based on the regularity and frequency of parents' attendance at church. An outcome of this is that the socio-economic cross-section of the school is predominantly middle class, judged by the low percentage of students who have free school meals. The parental market therefore is attracted to the more traditional values of the school and the more rigid parameters. Parents show and take a very active part in the school life and they fully support the school's expectations of sixth formers, which may be deemed as somewhat more restrictive than other sixth forms (our sixth formers have a 'smart suit' with white shirt and school tie dress code and we insist on attendance throughout the school day in Year 12 and for half the day in Year 13). There is therefore a very particular market which is attracted to the school and sixth form and the attendant structures in the sixth form reflect this.

Research project

This research looks at the amount of time devoted to academic studies (at home and at school) and the amount of time involved in part-time employment and considers whether there are any detrimental effects of students juggling their time doing both.

There is a recognition of the number of students involved in part-time employment and the enormous pressure 16-18 year olds are under to support and sustain very sophisticated life-styles. While the benefits of part-time employment are recognised, the time management implications cannot be emphasised too greatly. New Year 12 students do not realise the huge transition from GCSE to A Levels/GNVQ courses and the amount of work required to secure success. Many take on part-time employment without realising the attendant pressure. Therefore, structures and parameters within the sixth form have been created to try and improve time-management, and structured study time in school is aimed at reducing dropout rates, improving completion and raising attainment. The following structures have been implemented to assist students in their adaptation to and involvement in sixth form life, and to encourage them in the added responsibility of using the allotted free time sensibly.

- Attendance throughout the school day is compulsory for Year 12 students. There is greater flexibility for Year 13 students (they may go home at lunchtime, post-registration if they have no afternoon classes).
- Year 12 students are guided in time-management through the Induction programme at the beginning of their sixth form career, and the tutorial programme in Year 12.
- Students are provided with student planners in which they are expected to map their expected time usage over a typical week. Students are encouraged to review their management of time throughout the year.
- Students sign a contract on admission to say they will adhere to these sixth form expectations.

The question my research is exploring is:

'How many hours are sixth form students involved in part-time employment and academic study at home and at school? Do students perceive that employment has a detrimental effect on their studies?'

In particular I wished to consider whether there is any relationship between the number of hours that students are involved in part-time employment and the amount that they study - both at home and at school. I feel that it is not the number of hours in part-time employment (although there is obviously an upper threshold limit - an area which I also explore) which affects students' achievement, but rather the ability of students to manage their time effectively. In addressing this question, two further variables were considered:

- Gender - male or female
- Stage in the sixth form - Year 12 or Year 13

Having identified how employment may affect time-management, and thus achievement, an outcome of this research (which is beyond the brief of this research project) would be to consider how to counsel students in the taking of employment - viz:

1. Should we make recommendations about the number of hours students should be working - or even, should we be making students sign a contract saying that they will not work more than a certain number of hours?

2. Should we be more pro-active in guiding students in the management of time so that they are more easily able to cope with the demands of juggling both academic study and a part-time job?

3. The results of the data collected and analysed will help to affirm (or otherwise) my desire of further monitoring students' usage of their free time - possibilities include supervised study periods or a sign-in system.

4. Ideally I would like to consider the results in summer 2000 against the amount of time worked at home/school and spent in part-time employment to see if there are any emergent patterns.

The initial research metamorphosed into a pilot, largely because of a management issue. Structured questionnaires were issued at random to a small sample of students who were employed on a part-time basis. It became clear, however, when considering the sparsity of returns that the distribution and collection of data would need to be more structured. Therefore, the purpose and content of the research was outlined to tutors during a Tutor Group meeting and the data was to be collected by tutors during the timetabled 40-minute tutorial period and 20-minute morning registration. This proved a successful strategy and all students in attendance (127 Year 12 and 89 Year 13 students) on the day the questionnaire was issued responded. The primary method of data collection was a structured questionnaire which yielded quantitative data for analysis.

At the outset, students completed a time-planning sheet which required them to plot the usage of their spare time for:

1. Study - at both home and school
2. Part-time employment

I wished them to do this before they completed the questionnaire so that they had thought through and mapped out the usage of their spare time. This information was used to answer the questionnaire. Each student within a tutor group transferred the information from the questionnaire onto a spreadsheet I had provided. This made for much quicker processing of data - I did not need to go through 216 questionnaires. More importantly it meant that students were less likely to change their answers on seeing the number of hours other students had written down if they had already worked out their own responses, drawn from their time-planning sheets.

Initial concerns that students would be dismissive of the requests to provide the amount of study time and number of hours worked proved unfounded and there was an almost 100 per cent return from most tutor groups. I believe students were honest in the answering of the questionnaire (corroborated by tutors' knowledge of their students) even though the data collected was potentially sensitive: I had guaranteed that no information provided could be tracked to individual students to be used against them, especially the number of hours worked in part-time employment.

There were two constraints on this research. First, students found it difficult to complete the time-planning sheets. They claimed that each week was different and had different time commitments and pressures, depending on coursework deadline, and homework assignments. Second, the observations made about the differences between Year 12 and Year 13 study and employment patterns cannot be generalised for all Year 12 and Year 13 cohorts nor can one assume that these reflect fixed trends. Ideally for the research to be truly representative, I would need to follow a group from Year 12 into Year 13 to note any changes - preferably over a number of years. However, the time-scale and the scale of this project did not allow for this.

Research findings

Study patterns

1. The research considered the number of hours worked at home and at school during students' free periods. The over-riding finding was that girls in both Years 12 and 13 work harder than the boys by almost five hours a week.

2. The girls use almost all the available free hours at school and in Year 12 they work significantly more than boys at school (7.3 hrs compared to 4.15): in Year 13 they work significantly more than boys at home (15.49 hrs compared to 10.74).

3. In Year 13 there is a noticeable increase in the number of hours (7.13) that boys work at school compared to what they do in Year 12 (4.15 hrs) but although they work an average of an hour more than the girls do at school in Year 13, the total amount worked is still 4-5 hours a week less than the girls work, in both Years 12 and 13. There is little change in the total number of hours worked by girls/boys between Years 12 and 13.

4. There were individual anomalies among subjects which skewed the study time. In Year 12, of the 24 students who worked ten hours or more a week on a subject six (25 per cent) were girls studying Psychology. Only five (25 per cent) boys worked more than ten hours or more in any subject. In Year 13, four girls studying French or Spanish worked ten hours or more a week and a phenomenal total of 104 hours a week was spent on Music by four girls in one tutor group. An interesting point to consider is whether the time committed to Music can be entirely attributed to 'academic study': it may be argued that practising an instrument is leisure time - or part-of extra-curricular activities such as playing rugby!

5. The GNVQ groups are discrete tutor groups and their study time at school was significantly and noticeably higher than those of other tutor groups. This is partly explained by the fact that students have more free periods a week than do those following A Level courses. It is encouraging to note that they are using their time wisely.

Totals and averages of students' study patterns

	Girls			Boys		
Group	Studying home (hr)	Studying school (hr)	Total (hr)	Studying home (hr)	Studying school (hr)	Total (hr)
Yr 12 average	13.70	7.30	21.00	12.52	4.15	16.67
Year 13 average	15.49	6.12	21.61	10.74	7.13	17.87

Work patterns

The research considered the number of hours involved in part-time employment.

Hours worked in part-time jobs by sixth form students - by year group

	Girls	Boys
Group	Job (hr)	Job (hr)
Yr 12 Average	7.35	8.43
Yr 13 Average	7.30	8.92

The over-riding finding was that there was little difference in the number of hours worked by students in Year 12 and Year 13, but boys work on average an hour more a week than girls do. (Girls: 7.35/7.30 hrs; boys: 8.43/8.29 hrs.)

1. More boys than girls work ten hours or more a week: 12/48 (25 per cent) of the girls working in Year 12, while in Year 13 11/33 (33 per cent). 15/35 (43 per cent) Year 12 boys compared to 14/26 (53 per cent) Year 13 boys work ten hours or more.

2. Six Year 12/13 girls work 15 or more hours compared to seven boys. An interesting observation - which is beyond the brief of the project because of confidentiality - is the fact that every boy who works over 14 hours has been referred to me for academic underachievement!

3. Twelve girls, compared to seven boys in Year 12 and Year 13 indicated that part-time employment on occasion affected their homework or reading around their subjects. Five boys felt employment affected their meeting of deadlines whereas no girls noted any effect. Only 19 students indicated that part-time employment had any negative effect on their studies. Further research will indicate whether this view is borne out by their teachers and their results.

The girls in 13I tutor group showed significantly more hours involved in part-time employment but these students also spent the most time in academic study at school.

Totals and averages of students' work patterns

Implications for action by the school

From the data provided by the students, it seems clear that, on average, they are using their study periods effectively: this was very pleasing to note. The only clear instances where part-time employment could be impinging on students' study time were where students were committed to more than 15 hours employment a week. As a result, a recommendation will be made on entry to the sixth form about the number of hours students should be working.

One cannot make direct links between the effect of the structures, induction and guidance given to sixth formers on entry, with the apparent ease with which they cope with part-time employment and the meeting deadlines and homework. However, this research does indicate that students are able to cope, on the whole, with the time-management demands of study and part-time employment. Further qualitative research through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires would allow greater exploration of how students manage their time and would allow consideration of whether the structures of the sixth form make a direct impact on student time-management.

Boys do not make good use of their study time at school in Year 12 and this is a cause for concern. While they work a comparable number of hours at home in Year 12, they are also involved in more employment hours. In Year 13 the time spent studying at school increases by three hours, but the number of hours worked at home drops by almost two hours. The number of hours boys are involved in part-time employment also increases. The results of the data collected indicate that boys may require closer monitoring than girls - supervised study periods or a sign-in system would be appropriate in individual instances but would counteract my commitment to encourage students into taking responsibility for their own learning and time-management as they progress through their sixth form career.

Ideally, I would like to consider the results in summer 2000 against the amount of time worked at home/school and spent in part-time employment to see if there are any emergent patterns.

Further areas meriting research in school as a result of findings

In order to provide more incisive information into the effect of employment on achievement, I would wish to analyse predicted and actual grades against the number of employment hours worked of specific students on either side of the continuum of achievement. Certainly in giving the students names and hours in employment a cursory glance, unsurprisingly the highest achieving students commit themselves to the greatest number of hours of study, and the least amount of part-time employment - and vice-versa!

I would wish to utilise qualitative methods in further research into this area - time constraints precluded this at this stage. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches would ensure triangulation and the validity and reliability of data collected. By using semi-structured interviews, it would be possible to ascertain more fully students' experience if ensuring the delicate balance of study and employment.

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The Harwich School, Harwich

Suzanne Lynch

School context

The Harwich School is a mixed comprehensive with a population of approximately 1200 students. There are about 170 in the sixth form studying A Levels and Advanced and Intermediate GNVQs. Our A Level subjects comprise Maths, English, Geography, Drama, Chemistry, French, German, Physics, Psychology, Art, Biology, History, PE, Computing and General Studies. We also offer Advanced GNVQ Business and Intermediate levels in Business, Health and Social Care and Science.

The ethos of The Harwich Sixth Form is to raise achievement levels through value-added tutorials and periodic reviews. Attendance at lessons has been a feature of this year's approach and we have attendance at over 90 per cent for both Years 12 and 13.

A number of Year 13 students can choose to take part in the Anglian Compact to gain accreditation in at least three of the key skills areas. It can help gain extra UCAS points if applying to Angela Polytechnic University and add to the quality of Personal Statements and references.

The research project

The aim of the research was to gauge the reactions of the sixth form to the relationship between studying and working. A closed answer questionnaire was issued to students in Year 12 and 13 and this was followed up by group interviews and some individual interviews with selected Year 13 students who were working over ten hours per week.

I received 95 completed questionnaires which is 56 per cent of the cohort. Of this number, 76 have part-time work (80 per cent). The reasons for working are generally summed up by 'needing the money'. (See Appendix 1 and 2 for responses to questionnaire and interviews.)

Research findings

The findings showed that a small number of the students do not work. The majority of those who do work are employed in supermarkets and shops in the area. Other jobs include babysitting, hotels and cleaning.

A total of 30 of the students worked 6-10 hours a week (33 per cent) with 22 working more than 11 hours a week (23 per cent). Generally the students claimed that they studied for longer hours than they worked and rated their schoolwork highly, with the idea they would increase the hours of study as modular exams approached.

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The majority of Year 13 students I interviewed felt part-time work did not affect their studies and that they should be allowed to do it as part of establishing their independence. An element of responsibility showed itself when most of the students said they would choose not to do any extra hours around modular exam time and that some of the more able students said they would reduce the number of hours worked. There was some evidence of employer pressure to work extra hours at certain points in the year. Those who worked for a local hotel complained about the threat of losing their posts if they did not work the extra hours required over the Christmas period. The retail sector employees gained more time off because of the Bank Holidays during that time.

The main reason for working is that parental financial support is either reduced or does not provide enough money to support the increased economic needs of being a sixth form student. Money is used for school requirements and social life expenses, including running cars and funding mobile phone bills.

In individual interviews with Year 13 students who were working more than the recommended ten hours of part-time work a week there was a general perception that part-time work does not affect their studies. One male student works the hours he is asked, including overtime, as he plans to use the supermarket scheme to help him to find a part-time position near his chosen university. A female student needed the money so as not to be a burden to her foster mother. Both these students are studying at least one modular subject and have one E grade each in their subjects. They are students of average ability with predicted grades of D/E.

Implications and further areas of study

Generally most of the students seem to have found a balance between part-time work and study. However, I decided to look at the January 2000 modular results to see if this was actually the case. These told a different story. As noted before, students working more than the recommended hours are not achieving their predicted grades. However, there are also indications that certain students, who work part-time, are achieving higher grades than predicted.

This suggests that I will need to consider balancing work and study as independent learners, ie are they really independent learners, do they need more guidance, are they fully committed to studying? With the new curriculum in September 2000, this becomes a priority.

The other consideration is the teachers' views of part-time work and study. I am planning a questionnaire for A Level teachers to gather their ideas. From informal discussions, it appears most teachers do not accept part-time work as a way of gaining good grades. This also links back to the consideration of effective teaching and learning methods.

Lastly, the school had an OFSTED visit in December 1999. In the area of A Level studies the inspectors highlighted that the teaching was good and the learning of the students was good, but the achievement rate did not support what was happening in the classroom. Once again I am led back to the effectiveness of independent learners. The idea of helping students to become effective learners seems to be the main area for further work with the current Year 12 and the new cohort in September 2000.

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Appendix I Results of the questionnaire

1) A total of 95 students returned completed questionnaires.
76 students do have a job.
19 do not.
percentage of replies is 55.8 per cent.

2) Fiveways employs 12.
Babysitting employs 10.
Cliff Hotel and the catering industry employ 7.
The rest are scattered around different shops, other supermarkets and Harwich Port.

3) 30 students work 6-10 hours. (This is interesting as it is the recommended number of hours.)
20 students work 11-15 hours.
15 students work 1-5- hours.
11 students work 15+ hours.

4) 32 students earn £3-4 per hour.
21 students earn £2-3 per hour.
10 students earn £4-5 per hour.
10 students earn over £5 per hour.

5) Reasons for working. (Students were able to choose more than one choice.)
53 students said they needed the money.
49 said they needed it to pay for their social life.
36 said they needed it to pay expenses.

6) 56 students do not work longer hours than they study.
19 students work longer than they study.

7) 79 students will not miss lessons to work.
3 students said they would.

8) 57 students said they would work longer hours in the holidays.
17 students said no.
2 students said sometimes.

9) 67 students said they value their schoolwork as very important.
8 students said the same importance.
1 student said less importance.

10) 56 students will increase their study hours before modular exams.
25 will keep their study hours the same.

56

Appendix 2 Students' Comments from the Group Discussion

FOCUS: Relationship between Work and Study.
Groups of 5 year 13 students.

Differing view points:

- generally does not affect study;
- should be able to balance the time, although one resented having to do it;
- most chose not to do extra hours around modular exam time;
- catering workers had the most problems because of the nature of their work;
- balanced by some employers, eg shops did not require Christmas hours;
- ideal time for work is evenings so school work can be done. This affects their social life but the students are prepared to do it;
- a few had parental support in the form of finance and so did not have to work. Others have to work as parents no longer provide financial support;
- money used for school and social life;
- most were planning to stop when exams and finals loom;
- idea of gaining independence strong.

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Hylands School, Chelmsford

Ian Rawstorne

School context

Hylands School is a co-educational foundation school of around 850 students. The school is situated on the western edge of Chelmsford. Over the past five years the school's performance at GCSE has remained quite constant with between 45 per cent and 50 per cent of Year 11 students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C. This academic year a curriculum working party has made changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum with a view to providing a curriculum that suits the needs and abilities of all students. The changes made include the introduction of a GNVQ in ICT at both Foundation and Intermediate levels.

The sixth form at Hylands currently contains 105 students. The staying-on rate from Year 11 is typically around 45 per cent- 50 per cent of the year group. Seventeen AS/A Levels are being offered to next year's Year 12, an increase from the 15 that have been offered in the recent past. GNVQs in Business and Health and Social Care at Advanced and Intermediate levels are also being offered and these courses are now well established in the sixth form.

Sixth form students have their own purpose built Sixth Form Centre that was completed in the summer of 1999. This contains both a Common Room and a Study Room. The students are organised into Year 12 and Year 13 tutor groups and they register in the mornings and afternoons. Attendance is, therefore, full-time although there is room for some flexibility in the system. There is an expectation that students complete an agreed number of study periods in the Study Room – the room is supervised. A work-orientated environment where students learn to manage their own learning therefore exists in the sixth form and students are treated as young adults whose views are sought and respected.

Research project

The main aim of my research was to discover the effects of part-time work on A Level performance. I chose to focus on the effects of part-time work on students' performance as raising achievement in the sixth form is an integral part of my work as Post-16 Co-ordinator.

A secondary aim of my research was to inform my advice to Year 12 in September 2000 regarding part-time work. The broadening of the post-16 curriculum with the advent of *Curriculum 2000* obviously meant that students would typically be taking more subjects in the sixth form and those subjects would leave them with less study time in school.

In order to achieve these aims I set the following objectives to:

- find out the amount of and patterns of students' part-time work;
- compare students' perceptions of the effects of part-time work with *reality;*
- discover how a *busier curriculum* (with the imminence of *Curriculum 2000*) would affect students' decisions regarding part-time work.

I decided to devise a questionnaire for sixth form students to complete. In addition, I organised sixth form tutor group discussions led by sixth form tutors. Tutors were provided with some key questions, designed to facilitate discussion and produce responses that would help to meet the objectives of my research. Tutors were asked to provide written feedback on their tutor group's discussion.

To measure students' performance I used a comparison between their Target Minimum Grades (based on GCSE performance – using Durham University's ALIS system) and their estimated grades (predicted by subject staff).

Research findings

1. Hours worked

Out of a total of 94 students, the following proportions worked part-time:

- 21 per cent did no part-time work
- 3 per cent worked 0-5 hours
- 44 per cent of students worked 6-10 hours.
- 21 per cent worked 11-15 hours
- 10 per cent of students did 16-20 hours
- 1 per cent worked 21+ hours.

2. Part-time work – when?

Forty six per cent of students worked only at the weekend. 39 per cent worked at the weekend and during the week. 15 per cent only worked during the week. The discussion groups revealed a preference on the part of students to work at the weekend although they often found it difficult to secure a job that only required them to work at the weekend.

3. The effects of a busier curriculum

The results of this part of my research showed that just over 50 per cent of students would reduce the amount of part-time work they were doing if they had a busier curriculum i.e. four A/AS-levels rather than three. A similar percentage had already reduced or planned to reduce the amount of part-time work they were doing.

4. Students' perceptions – effects of part-time work on study

There were two areas where a significant proportion of students felt that part-time work occasionally had a detrimental effect on their study. These were quality of work (35 students) and meeting deadlines (25 students).

5. Analysis of students' academic performance in relation to part-time work

In order to measure students' academic performance I compared students' Target Minimum Grades with their estimated grades. I only used A Level students for this analysis. I calculated the total A Level points score (using the UCAS points system) for each student based on his/her Target Minimum Grades and then did the same with each student's estimated grades. I was then left with a residual for each student. A negative residual meaning the student was underachieving, a positive residual meaning the student was adding value based on national averages. I then grouped students according to both the amount of part-time work they were doing and by the time in the week they were completing the part-time work. From this I worked out the cumulative residual scores for these different groups.

The findings are inconclusive. Firstly owing to the very small numbers of students doing either 0-5 hours, 21+ hours or to a lesser extent 16-20 hours these statistics can not be seen as totally reliable. There are obviously a number of factors that influence students' A Level performance and the fact that no strong patterns emerge from this analysis tends to suggest that part-time work is not one of the most important of these factors. There is, however, a certain consistency in the cumulative residuals for Year 12 and 13 students who are doing 6-10 and 11-15 hours of part-time work per week.

Implications for action

The nature of the findings suggests that it is better to counsel students individually regarding part-time work as it is only one of many factors that influence academic performance. This necessitates adding part-time work to the agenda of tutorials between sixth form tutors and students.

Sixth form tutors and the staff who teach sixth form students need to be made aware of the findings of the research in order to attempt to combat the pre-conceptions that exist with regard to part-time work and sixth form students' academic performance.

There was some consensus that emerged from the discussion groups and this could be shared with Year 12 in September 2000. That consensus was that ten hours per week was seen as being a manageable amount of part-time work and the weekend was seen as the most appropriate time of the week to complete the work.

Areas for further research

According to the analysis of students' academic performance Year 13 students are adding more value than Year 12. This may be owing to the fact that staff's estimated grades tend to get higher for many students as they progress through the sixth form. Analysis of the present Year 13's estimated grades going back to March of Year 12 needs to be undertaken in order to discover whether this is the case. If it is not the case then research needs to be undertaken to discover why the current Year 12 is not performing as well as Year 13 did when that year group was at the same stage of the sixth form.

Research into the demands of *Curriculum 2000* on students should be undertaken at some point in the next academic year. It is important to continue to seek sixth form students' views in order to inform the service we provide in the sixth form.

Mayflower High School, Billericay

Richard Maples

Mayflower is a mixed comprehensive school, one of two very similar schools which serve Billericay. The school has 1500 on roll with approximately 280 in the sixth form. The school is seen as an academic comprehensive school in an area where the local grammar schools still remain a potential draw for aspiring middle class parents. The school has built up a reputation for examination success as its 1999 results of 66 per cent GCSE 5 A-C results and 17.6 average A Level points score confirms. As a consequence it acts as a magnet for parents in Basildon and Wickford who are seeking to enhance their children's educational opportunities. As a result the school is over subscribed.

The size of the sixth form allows us to offer of a broad range of subjects mostly at A Level but also with a now long established Advanced GNVQ in Business and Finance. Outside of this, opportunities are given for GCSE retakes, and for weaker students, an Intermediate GNVQ in Business and Finance. The curriculum offer made to returning sixth formers is one based on a GCSE related assessment of suitability.

The research project

The issue of this research project was the relationship between the academic performance of students and their part-time work commitments. This is an area of concern for two reasons, firstly because of the high proportion of students who work and secondly because Curriculum 2000 A Level will require students to increase the number of subjects covered. In this new environment the impact of part-time work will thus be potentially magnified as the amount of time and number of subjects studied increases.

The investigation was undertaken through a survey questionnaire, which was given to students in Year 13 to complete in their tutorial period, which collected details of both their studies and their work profile. In the questionnaire students were asked to give details of their academic profile, with the range of possible A Level or GNVQ results considered from the student perspective of a predicted grade and a best possible grade. This will give a rough guide and the more statistically valid assessment will be provided by the analysis of the actual results. Matching the student's actual results with the expectation will facilitate this analysis. This expectation will be identified by reading off the A Level predicted points total from the Mayflower line of 'A' level expected performance. This measure has been arrived at by matching the GCSE average points score against actual A Level outcome, as achieved at Mayflower in the last three years, and by creating a graph which plots a best fit line. As a consequence it should be possible to see if there is a difference between those with a heavy part-time work commitment and those who do not work extensively.

Research findings

The student response to the questionnaire, was good with all 140 of the current students in Year 13 at Mayflower completing the survey. Of the 140 respondents, 122 either had or still have a part-time job: thus 87 per cent worked and 13 per cent did not. Those who did not work were asked to say why.

These were:

Why don't you have a job?	No who selected	% of students
Can't get one	0	0
Don't want one	4	19
Currently in-between jobs	4	19
Parents provide spending money	13	62
Believe it would adversely affect A Level study	13	62

It would appear that for this small group of students that there was a recognition that having a job could adversely affect A Level study performance and that their parents were prepared to meet the economic costs of them not having a job.

The 122 students worked in a range of jobs:

Type of job	Number	%
Retail/Supermarket	9	48
Restaurant/Pub/Fast Food	29	24
Sport/Leisure	5	12
Service	9	16

The distribution of jobs suggests that students were able to find work in those areas that had a demand for extra capacity at either weekends or in the evenings. The students were also asked how many hours they worked per week.

Hours	Number	%
Less than 4	2	2
4 to 8	36	29
8 to 12	45	37
12 to 16	22	18
Over 16	17	14

The results reflect a heavy work commitment with 69 per cent of students working eight or more hours and 32 per cent working 16 or more hours. Clearly many students work more than one day and balance this with their study commitments. The worst individual case that was highlighted in terms of long working hours was a student who worked 35 hours a week. This was obviously far more than would ever be expected but the student did this at weekends as night work and was being predicted a distinction in GNVQ Advanced Business.

The next section of the questionnaire tried to locate precisely when students worked.

Of the working students:

- 86 or 70% worked on Saturday
- 63 or 52% worked on Sunday
- 35 or 29% worked on both Saturday/Sunday
- 24 or 20% worked on both Saturday/Sunday and at least one weekday.

Of the students working weekdays the survey showed:

- 68 or 58% worked one weekday
- 28 or 23% worked at least two weekdays
- 12 or 9% worked at least three weekdays
- 4 or 3% worked at least four weekdays
- 2 or 2% worked five weekdays

In total, 68 of the 122 working students worked weekdays with the times worked varying from two to six hours. There was a wide range of start and finish times with some finishing as late as 10pm to midnight although this would most often be Fridays. It was common to work 5pm to 8.30pm, which reflects the demands of the local supermarkets and this illustrates the way in which students have been used to cover the extension of opening hours in these organisations. The students also worked during holiday time and although no specific questions were asked a number of students indicated that they increased their work at this period.

The next question tried to evaluate whether employers had attempted to place pressure on students to work. The scale given tried to gauge the nature of this pressure. The students were given a range on a five point scale from no pressure 'never' to maximum pressure 'always'.

'Does your employer/did your employer put pressure on you to work extra hours':

		%
Never	27	22
Rarely	26	21
Sometimes	38	31
Often	18	15
Always	13	11

These responses suggest that a majority of those students who work do experience some pressure to work extra hours. However, many jobs were clearly only weekend jobs with no prospect of any further work except in holiday time. The supermarkets in particular appeared far more likely to place pressure on students to work and to be prepared to be flexible to cover for other students unable to work. One aspect that was unable to be dealt with because of the Year 13 focus of this study is the way in which extra pressure comes to bear on Year 12 to cover as Year 13 reduce their commitment.

Students were then asked how they had responded to the approach of the A Levels with regards to the hours they spent on their part-time jobs.

- 73 or 60% continued with no change
- 42 or 34% cut down their hours
- 7 or 6% stopped their job altogether

This response reveals that many students felt in control of their part-time working and that very few felt the need to totally curtail it. Those who indicated a desire to cut down their part-time work still felt they could manage to combine limited work with their revision programme.

A linked question asked students to consider the likely impact of being asked to take on the demands of an extra A Level.

- 38 or 31% would continue with no change
- 48 or 39% would cut down their work
- 36 or 30% would have stopped their job

These projections show an interesting perception of the demands of an extra A Level. It is clear that the majority felt it unlikely they could maintain the same work pattern with an increase in study demands. This perception has implications for both the school and employers.

The final section of the questionnaire gave an even-handed opportunity for students to evaluate the impact of their part-time job. The first part gave them a five-point scale to consider what they thought might be its negative effect on their academic performance. One was identified as representing no effect through to five, which was maximum effect.

	1	2	3	4	5
Number	37	49	27	8	1
%	30	40	22	7	1

The last part gave the opportunity to consider possible positive effects. The results were:

	1	2	3	4	5
Number	62	27	22	7	4
%	51	22	18	6	3

These results suggest a student perception that part-time work has little negative effect on their academic performance. One possible contributory factor is that students studying Business Studies and GNVQ Business courses may have been able to see positive benefits from the part-time work. It is also possible that students feel that they are able to balance the demands of their studies and part-time work.

Implications

These collective findings represent preliminary observations and will need to be evaluated further when the actual A Level and GNVQ results are known this summer. They do, however, show the heavy involvement of students in part-time work and that the effects will need to be looked at in relation to students' academic performance.

Part-time work appears to be an accepted aspect of life in the sixth form and the high level of involvement would suggest that the issue is one of finding the balance between study and work through the setting of guidelines and counselling.

The other future concern is the impact of *Curriculum 2000* and the expansion of student programmes of study to four or more subjects. The school will need to be aware that students and employers will quite possibly find it difficult to adjust to the new regime and that some intervention may be necessary. It would seem necessary therefore to conduct further research of this type following the introduction of *Curriculum 2000*.

Philip Morant School, Colchester

Peter Johnson

School context

Philip Morant School is an 11-18 comprehensive with over 1600 pupils. It is a third phase Technology College, and has been awarded Investors in People and the Charter Mark. It is a beacon school and has been designated a training centre for ICT. Over ten years ago Colchester Sixth Form College was opened to serve the town and the surrounding area. All the secondary schools in Colchester then became 11-16. In the intervening period the college has gone from strength to strength and now has over 2000 students. Five years ago, however, helped by moves to promote freedom of choice, Philip Morant School was given permission to re-introduce a sixth form.

Numbers have risen each year to the point where it now has over 200 students. The majority of these are on A Level programmes, with three Advanced GNVQ courses also being offered. The school has managed to build extensively, with two new purpose built sixth form blocks and a new maths block with sixth form accommodation. Many lessons still take place in the main blocks however, and the growing numbers have put pressure on the accommodation. The great majority of students take three A Levels. A few are taking one A Level alongside an Advanced GNVQ programme. Nearly 90 per cent of leavers go on to higher education.

Having been heavily over-subscribed for many years at age 11, the school now finds itself in an unfamiliar position; that of being in competition with another thriving and highly successful organisation, the Colchester Sixth Form College. In its marketing it has chosen to emphasise the quality of teaching, its very high GCSE A*-C rate, the individual support which can be offered, the smaller group sizes, the familiarity factor and the opportunities available to work within the lower school. The school has had to tread a careful path in developing an ethos for the sixth form, attempting to retain the elements of 11-16 education which have proved so effective, while encouraging maturity and independence. At first students were allowed to sign themselves in, but this year a registration session has been put in place. Compulsory supervised private study has also been introduced.

The research project

There is a perception among staff at the school that part-time paid employment has a significant impact upon academic achievement. This study aims to investigate the truth of this perception while also looking at this issue in a more general way. As the sixth form is relatively new, and no survey of this kind has so far been attempted, the aim is to get as much data as possible to try to establish some kind of pattern. This seems of particular importance in view of the changes to the curriculum from September 2000, when most students will study four, rather than three subjects, and the school will need to be in a position to offer advice about paid employment.

It was decided to question all current and past A Level students to see if there are any changes in the patterns of work and, in the case of 1998 and 1999 leavers, to compare part-time working patterns with actual A Level results. A questionnaire was devised which attempted to cover several areas but which was still straightforward enough to be completed quickly. The wording was altered slightly for those students who have left, who were contacted by letter. The response rate was as follows:

- 1998: 28 out of 53 students
- 1999: 16 out of 41 students
- 2000: 45 out of 60 students
- 2001: 66 out of 104 students

The overall response rate was therefore 155 out of 258, or 60 per cent (throughout the project I have referred to each year group by its leaving date). Twelve students were then interviewed from the year 2000 group, six male and six female.

Research findings

How students use the time available to them

At present Philip Morant suggests to students that they should spend around five hours on each subject outside lessons. Figure 1 shows that, despite the fact that most have achieved well, only 17 per cent of students over the past four years have done so. A significant 42 per cent actually spent below three hours on each subject.

Figure 2 shows that there is a distinct difference between male and female students in the time spent on such work; nearly a third of male students spent less than two hours per subject. Only eight of the 87 female students in the sample claimed to do the same.

Figure 1: Hours spent on academic work outside lessons per subject

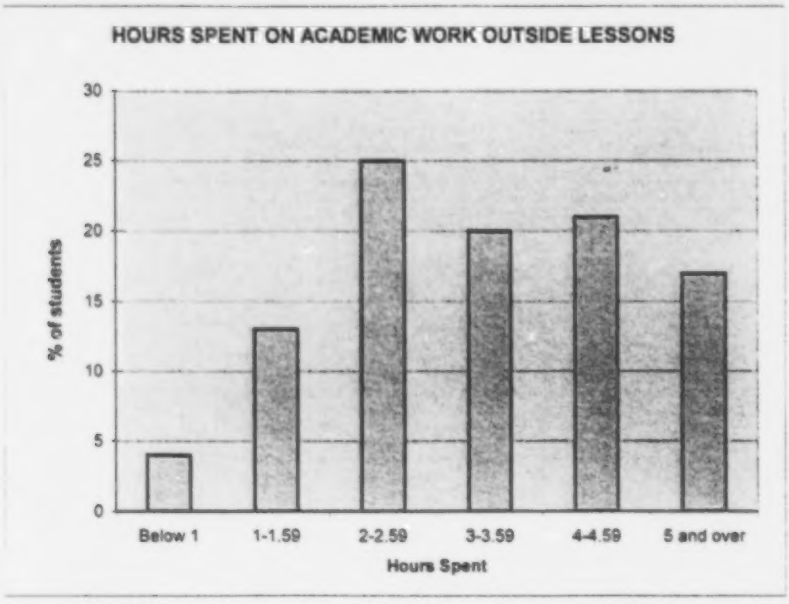


Figure 2: Academic hours worked per subject: male and female

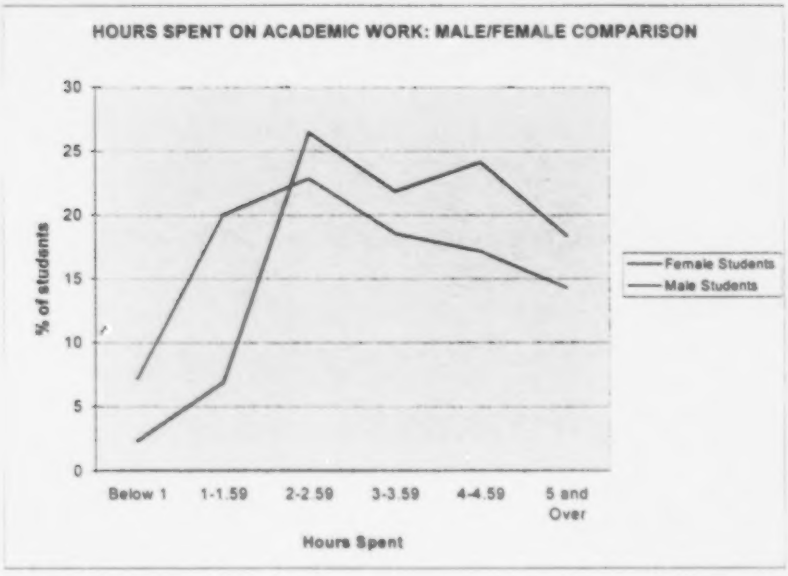
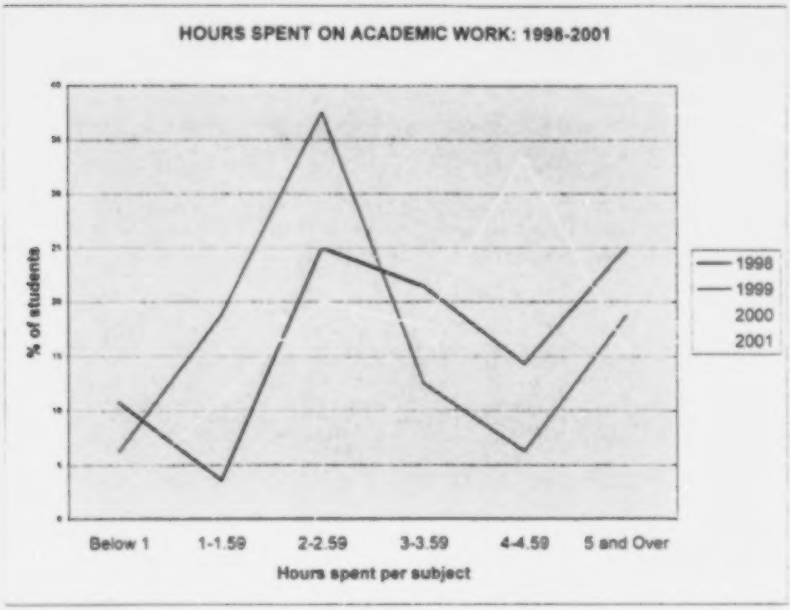


Figure 3 uses the same data to compare the last four years, somewhat inconclusively, but there are signs that students are increasing the amount of time spent on college work, in particular the year 2000 group.

Figure 3: Hours spent on academic work outside lessons per subject: 1998-2001



Paid employment

When the amount of time spent on paid employment is then compared with these findings, certain significant factors emerge. Figure 4 shows that there is only slight evidence that the former has a direct effect upon time allocated to academic work; many students seem to be able to organise their time sufficiently to manage both. There are even a few students who seem to be working over 20 hours per week yet still managing to spend four or five hours a week on each of their A Levels; these students are almost invariably male. At the other end of the scale, these statistics appear to confirm that there are students for whom any kind of activity is anathema and, perhaps unexpectedly, these tend to be female. It is instructive to note that, with the average student spending 20 hours on timetabled activities, some are therefore approaching a 60 hour working week (Figure 5). This is not preventing many of those same students spending a good deal of time socialising!

The difference between male and female students is certainly clear in this area; generally, the former work longer hours and study less. Two thirds of male students actually spend longer on paid employment; this is almost the reverse with female students (Figures 6 and 7). Female students are far more likely not to work at all: 22 per cent as against 13 per cent for male students.

Figure 4: Academic work compared to paid work (individuals)

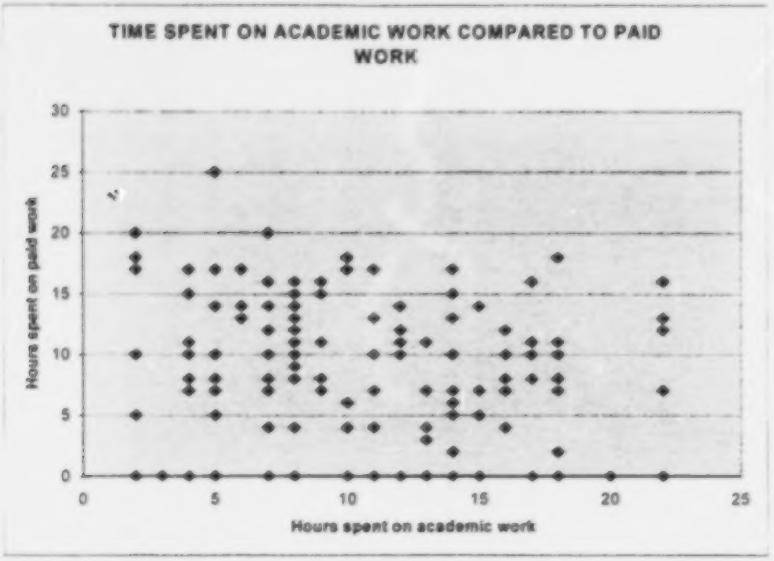


Figure 5: Hours spent on academic and paid work outside timetabled time

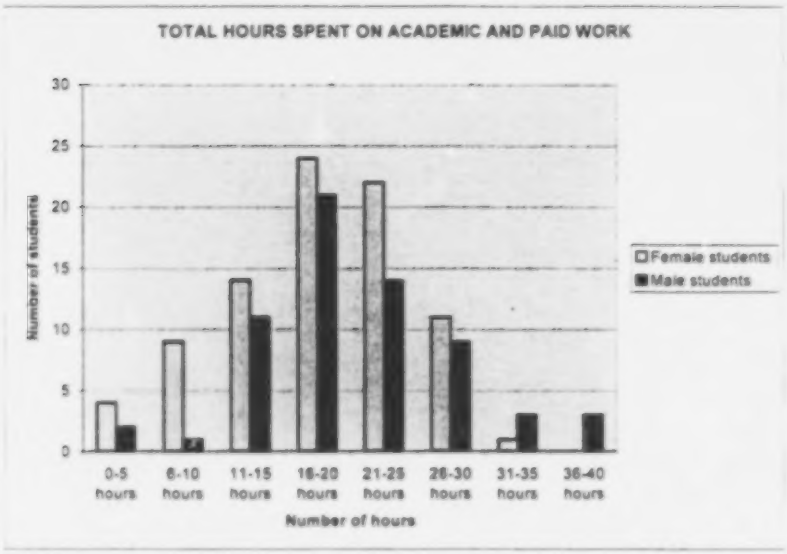


Figure 6: Comparison of paid/college work: Female

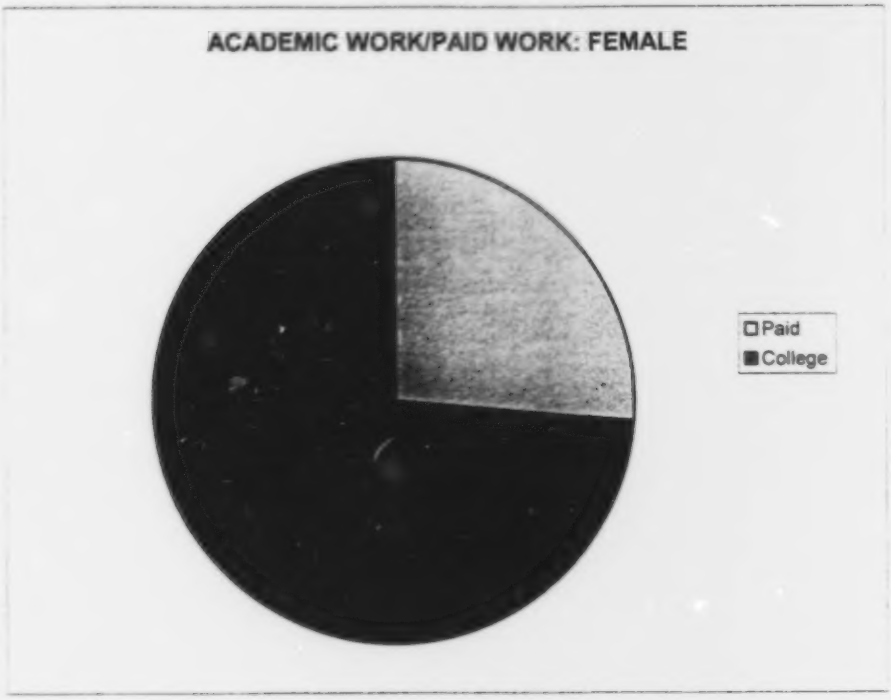
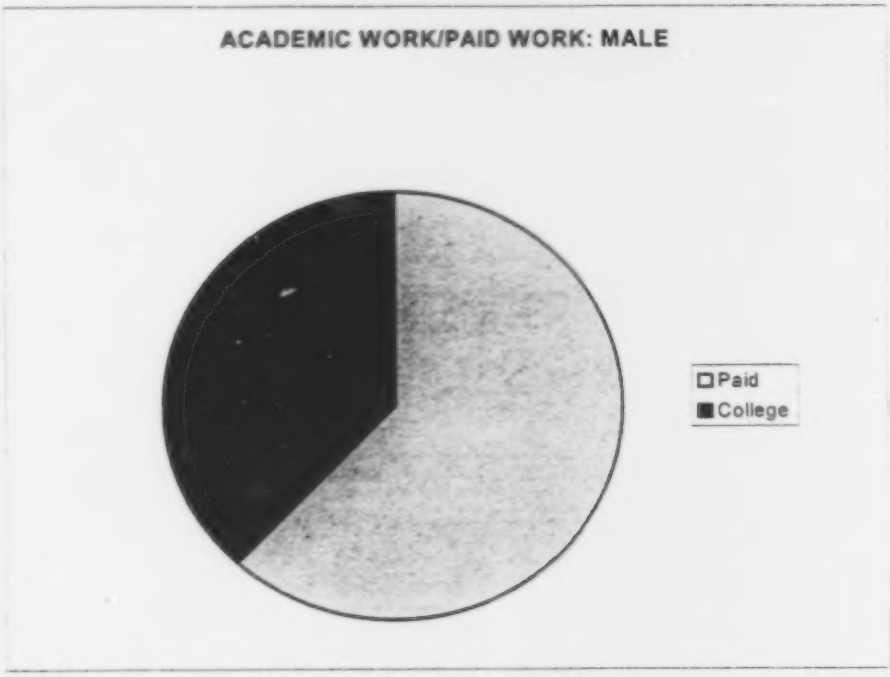


Figure 7: Comparison of paid/college work: Male



The effects of paid work

Sixth form leavers from 1998 and 1999 who responded to the questionnaire were asked to supply their names, which virtually all of them did. It has therefore been possible to compare their A Level results with target grades they were given based on GCSE results; estimated grades were compared with actual grades using the UCAS points system of ten points for an A grade, eight for a B grade and so on. Figures 8 and 9 attempt to use this information to assess how far paid employment and the amount of personal academic work had on those results.

The results may be considered surprising in that there appears to be very little connection between working significant numbers of hours and underachievement; in fact, some of those who added the most value to their earlier results were those who worked the most. Some students however, blame their relative underachievement squarely on their desire to have money during their time in the sixth form; one wrote that she feels that *'working has significantly contributed to my underperformance at A Level'*. She writes that she is *'now not very happy at uni[versity] because [she is] not doing what [she] wants to do'*. She *'had to work'* to have the freedom to *'go to the pub, go clubbing and buy clothes and CDs that [she] wanted'*. It should be noted, perhaps, that all those who did not work managed at least to achieve their target grades. One such student writes that *'at times it was hard not to have as much money as everybody else but [she] was lucky'*. Her mother supported her and she was still able to *'go out and enjoy [herself]'*. The first student failed to get into medical school, and the second succeeded. One other perhaps surprising result of this analysis is that there is little difference in the results of male and female students, despite the differences outlined in figures 6 and 7 (see figure 10).

The lack of a consistent pattern in figure 8 is also seen here in figure 9. It may be expected that there would be a clear correlation between good results and focused extra work. This does not appear to be the case. Many students who worked long hours on their A Levels failed to get above their predicted grades. In fact, two thirds of those who worked four hours or more failed to do so. One reason for some students performing above expectations may be that predicted grades are based on GCSE performance; in at least some of these cases, those students, although undeniably talented, underachieved at GCSE and were thus given lower targets in the first place.

Figure 8: Actual performance against hours of employment

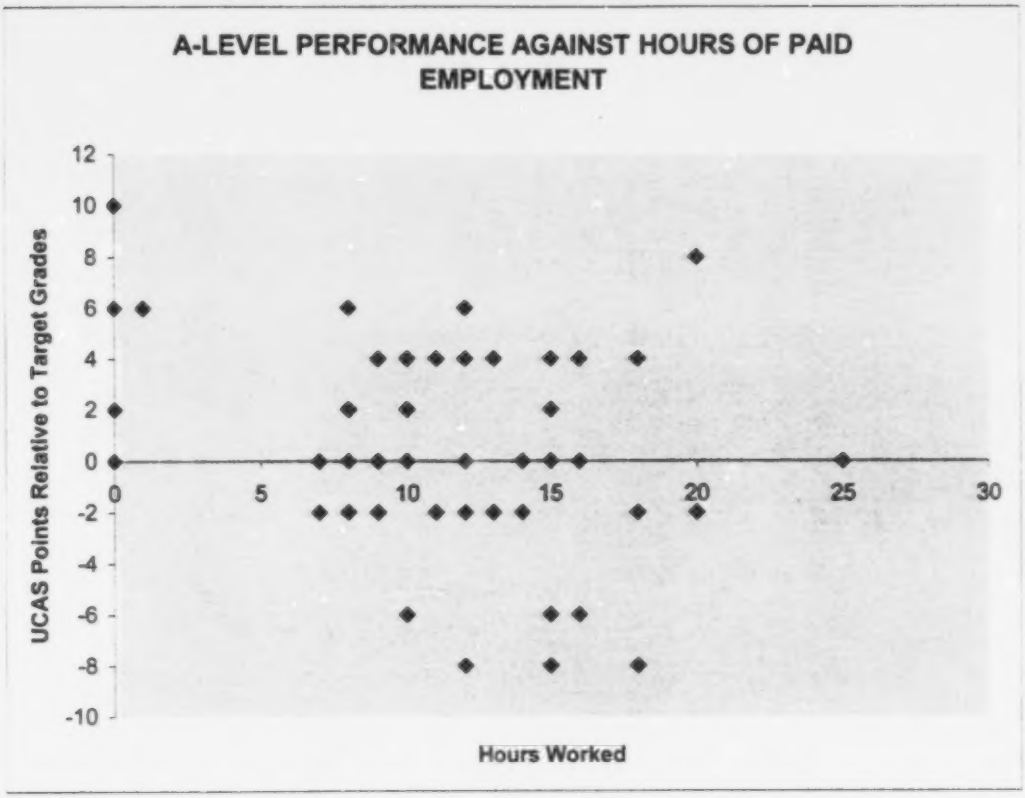


Figure 9: Actual performance against hours spent on academic work

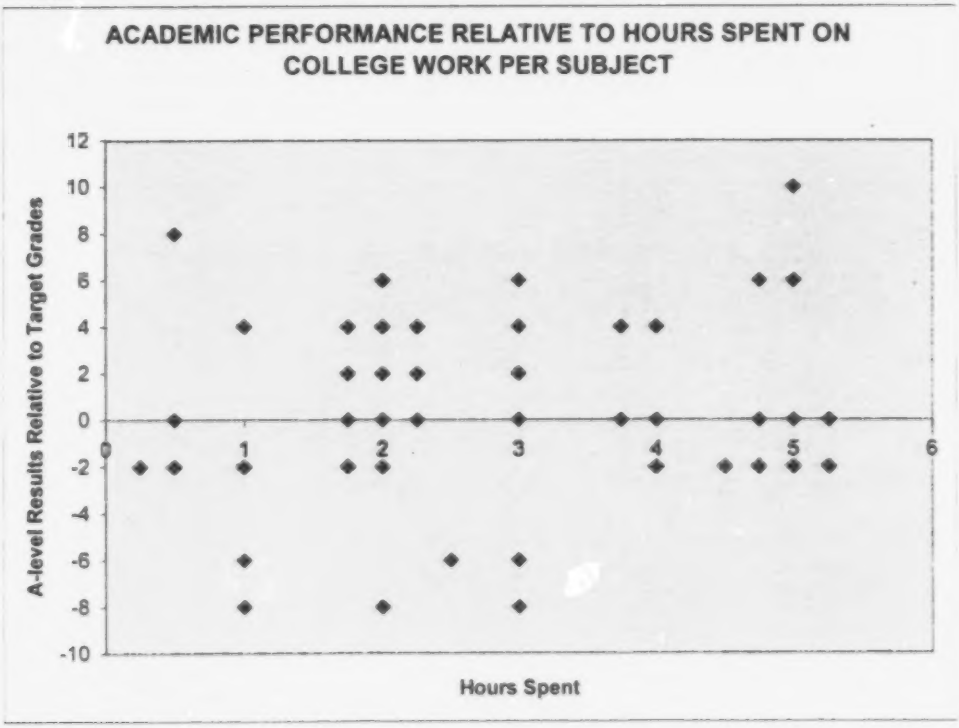


Figure 10: Results comparison: male and female students

UCAS Points Relative to Target Grades	Male Students	Female Students
10	0	1
8	1	0
6	1	3
4	5	3
2	2	2
0	5	5
-2	4	5
-4	0	0
-6	2	1
-8	1	2
-10	0	0

Why students work

Here, students were asked to select as many reasons as were relevant to them. That they work for a variety of reasons is not surprising and some of the results in Figure 10 could perhaps have been predicted. Socialising and having financial independence are obviously very important to many students and these elicited a large number of responses. However, there were students for whom other reasons loomed large. A significant minority now work to run a car, and the numbers who do so seem to be on the increase. An even larger group are now saving for higher education, which is another indication of social change; in interviews many students showed clear concern for the amount of money they will have to borrow and, while the catchment area is reasonably affluent, perhaps shown in the low number of students who work to help out at home, this is something of which they are very aware. One student confided that *'although my parents want to support me they just do not have enough money. I could not go to an open day at one of the universities I was really interested in because we could not afford either the train fare or the petrol.'* This student is saving virtually all the money she earns for next year.

Figure 10: Why students work

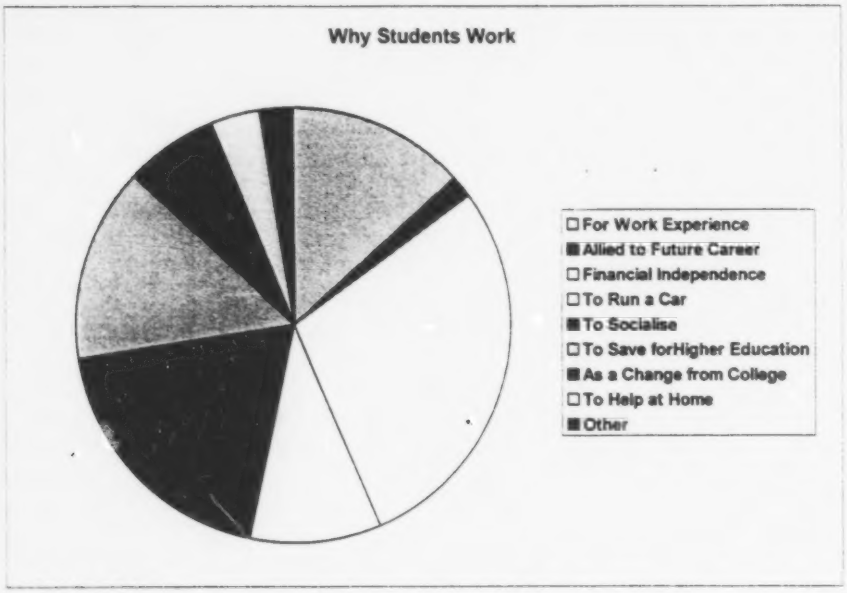
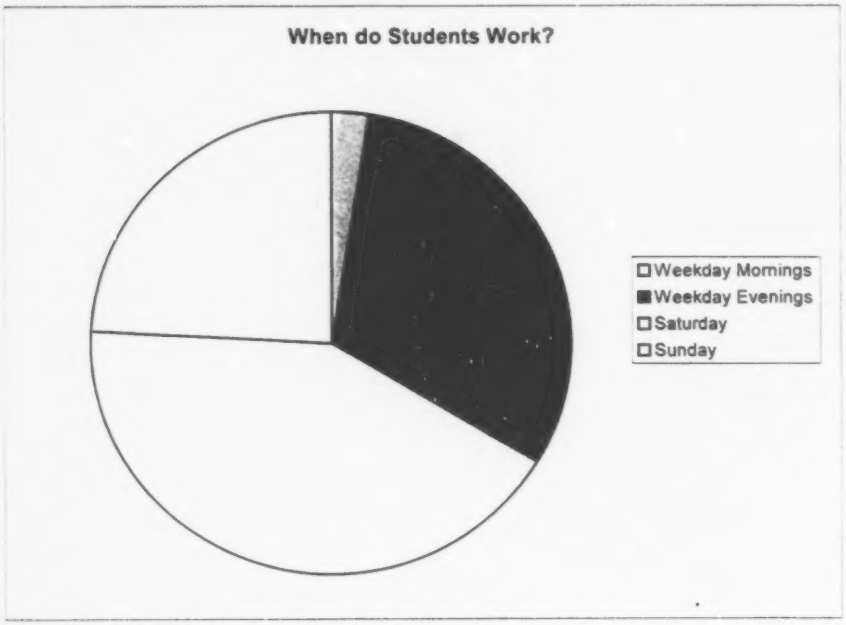


Figure 11: When students work



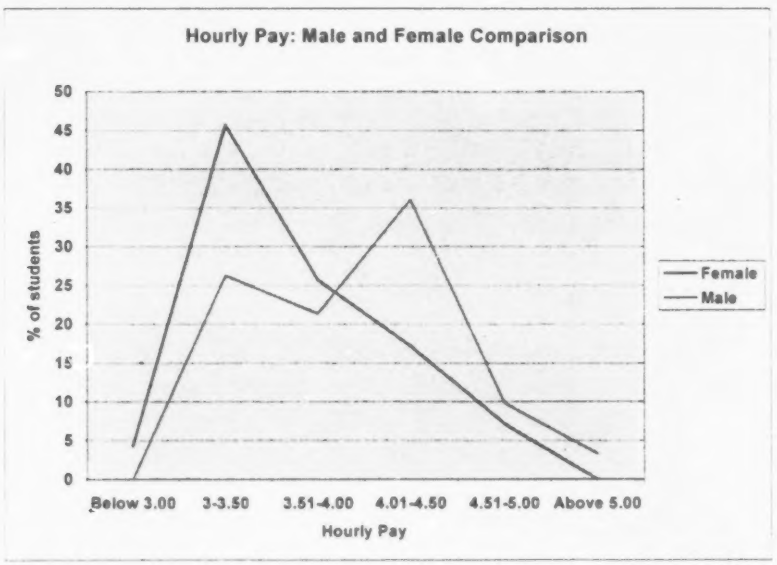
When do students work?

The great majority of students (76 per cent) are employed in either shop work, catering or cleaning. For some of these students, their hours of work are of necessity in the evening; several are employed by the school as cleaners, for example. Others work in retail outlets at the weekend. However, the largest number of students work for employers who could ask them to work at any time they are not in school, and in some cases when they should be. Some students work in supermarkets in the evenings and at the weekend, for example. Interviews with students seem to suggest that evening work is a particular problem when modules are coming up. One said that his employer had been very supportive of him but he *'did not like to let him down'* as *'he was finding it tough getting people to cover'* at that time. In fact, 84 per cent of students indicated that their employer was either *'very reasonable'* or *'reasonable'*, and few commented on pressure being put on them to work at examination time. Fifty six per cent saw this as an opportunity to cut down their hours at crucial times, but this did leave 44 per cent who continued to work the same. One student noted that her employer was *'not particularly understanding'*. *'Basically, if there was a night I could not come in I would have to find someone to cover it or it was 'goodbye, find a new job'*.' This same student admitted to missing many lessons early in the day because of feeling too tired, not surprising in view of the fact that her shift at a local restaurant '*began at 6.30 and ended between 12.30 and 1.00 am*'.

Relative salaries

One statistic, which seems salutary, if not revelatory, is that male students are already earning more than their female counterparts, despite the fact that the kinds of employment on which they are engaged are very similar. Figure 12 bears this out.

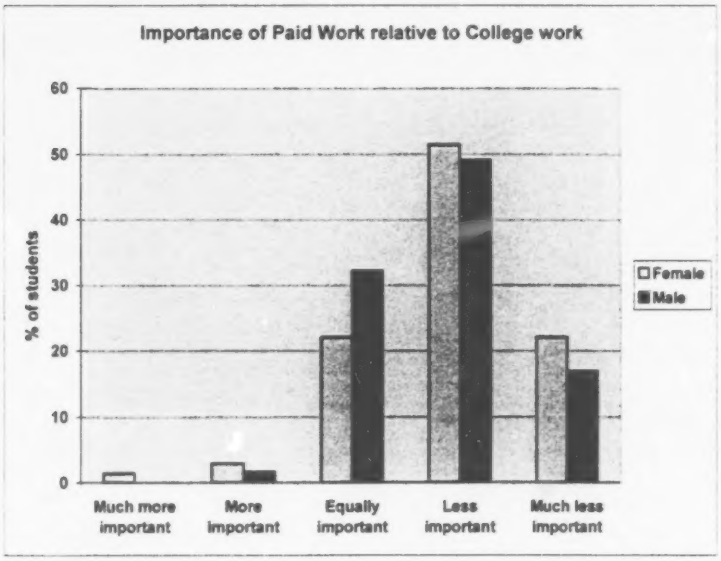
Figure 12: Relative salaries: male and female students



Student attitudes

Despite the significant hours of paid employment undertaken by many students, their intention does seem to be to perform as well as they can in their A Levels. A large percentage of them are keen to go on to higher education and do recognise the need to achieve. No student interviewed was prepared to say that he or she would sacrifice a grade here and there for the sake of having money now, and perhaps end up at what was perceived as a less good university. Those who were working long hours were still optimistic of their chances, even the student who was doing this out of necessity to pay off his credit card! In fact, in the questionnaire, only 3 per cent admitted that their paid work was more important to them than their academic work, although the 27 per cent for whom it is equally important make up a not inconsiderable number. All of this should be seen therefore in the context of the question of whether students felt that paid work was affecting their study. Of the 155 students in the sample, only one felt that it was affecting it 'a great deal' and only 14 'quite a lot'. Every student interviewed, however, was of the opinion that teachers disapproved of him or her working: *'they are forever spouting on about how the more work you do the more your grades are going to go down'*. As for parental attitudes, views vary, but the general consensus appears to be that they still have a large influence on what students do. Many year 13s are *'fed up'* with academic work at this stage of their course, even the more self-motivated, one of whom states that *'holidays are not holidays any more'*.

Figure 13: How important is paid work?



Conclusions

- Most students spend less than the time recommended on academic work and there is little evidence that this affects grades adversely.

- There is a gender issue, with male students doing more paid work and less academic work but, again, there is little evidence from their results that this is affecting performance.

- Those who work longer hours in part-time employment do not necessarily spend less time on academic work.

- The reasons why students work seem to be changing (e.g. saving for higher education).

- Most students feel employers are reasonable, and teachers often unreasonable

- Most students do not believe that work is affecting their grades.

Suggested action

- There is a need to educate staff about the issues surrounding paid employment in the sixth form as this is a complex issue; to claim that more paid work will lead necessarily to a lower grade is patently wrong.

- Tutors need to keep a close eye on certain individuals who may be at the risk of underachievement, and some advice needs to be given to all students, but in general the touch can be light.

- As half of all those questioned claimed they would cut down their working hours if their college commitment was greater, the implications of *Curriculum 2000* need to be considered.

- The tutorial team in the upper school, including year 11 tutors, should be retained and should work closely together on all these issues.

- Further investigation should take place; for example, information gathered for this survey could be used to analyse this year's results when they become available in August.

- Further analysis on the results of the year 2000 leavers at Philip Morant School has suggested a more obvious link between significant paid employment and underachievement at A Level. This more up-to-date analysis will be available in the spring of 2001 as an MSc dissertation on Education Management for Anglia Polytechnic University.

Rickstones Sixth Form College, Witham

Maria Burton

College context

Rickstones Sixth Form College is a sixth form college which draws its students largely from Rickstones School. The Sixth Form College offers 12 A Level courses and five GNVQ courses, advanced and intermediate. The intake is largely from Year 11 although there is a small proportion of students that are drawn from John Bramston school in Witham and the Braintree schools. The College promotes an ethos of building on the strengths of the individual, creating opportunities for independent learning and progress is monitored each half term to ensure target setting and planning are kept up to date. A full report is sent home twice a year to parents and there are two parent's evenings per year for each year group. The College also encourages parents to contact the Director of the Sixth Form at any time to discuss any student related issue.

In 1998-99, the average points score per examination entry at A and AS levels was 6.05 with males average being 6.4 and females 5.4. Using the summary of A/AS level results combined, the average points score per candidate entered was 13.5 for males and 9.5 for females. In the same year, the percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving 5 A-C grades was 37 per cent. With regard to the destinations of 124 Year 11 pupils - 43 stayed at school, 38 went onto further education elsewhere, 29 gained employment and 14 went to 'other' or 'unknown' destinations.

The research project

The project aimed to:

- establish current trends re: student aspirations, how many students hold part time jobs and student, parent and staff perception of that situation;
- identify 'at risk students' in relation to potential underachievement;
- identify more effective systems of guiding students in developing effective organisation, study and learning skills.

These aims were chosen as the focus to build a greater understanding of the nature of the Sixth Form College as it increases in size and how the diverse 'demands' placed on students may effect their 'success'. It will also raise the awareness of the students that there are a number of influential factors in relation to their potential achievement and support them in gaining independent control over their results. The research will also give staff greater information and enable them, particularly tutors to identify 'at risk' students and offer more effective support to the individual.

The research will be carried out using a student profile form that has been adapted from an example gained from Sutton Coldfield College; student questionnaires; student focus discussion group; seven parent interviews and six teaching staff interviews and staff questionnaires.

Research findings

Sixth Form teaching staff questionnaire

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Additional comments
Part time work adversely affects student attendance	1	4	6	0	Don't know
Part time work affects Student Attainment	4	7	2	0	Student quote – Couldn't do your work over ½ term, I have a job
More than half of the sixth form have a part time job	3	6	0	0	Don't know
Students who work have more confidence	1	10	2	0	
Students who work are more highly motivated to meet deadlines	1	10	2	0	Job used as excuse. Best ones can be.
Students who work have good organisational skills	2	10			
Students should not have part time jobs	1	2	9	2	Should concentrate on studies, if work – only at weekends
Students should be free to work at any time during the day – excluding lesson time	1	1	8	2	
I would advise students not to work whilst in full time education	2	5	8	0	No evidence, only suspicion.

Students give a higher priority to studies than to part time work.	1	5	6	1	Depends on students but they'd rather miss college trips than work
There is a clear relationship between commitment to school and attainment	5	8	1	0	
Young people are increasingly dependent on money & are drawn to work more hours	6	9	0	0	Society expects it – car ownership is biggest problem
Parents encourage their children to work	1	10	2	0	
Part time work experience contributes positively to GNVQ courses	1	7	2	0	If relevant, yes.

From this set of results a number of things come to light.

1. Not all the teaching staff are aware that their students have a job.

2. There is a strong suggestion that working has benefits such as positively contributing to GNVQ course work.

3. There is a high degree of understanding in relation to social pressures as to why students work and a large number of staff would not discourage work.

4. Students who work appear to have more confidence but there is a suggestion that only the students who are more intellectual also have the ability to organise their time and work well.

5. It appears that staff would not discourage students from having part-time jobs but also believe that, generally, it may have a detrimental affect on their attainment.

Parent interviews

The parents interviewed were picked randomly and gave the following responses:

Does your son/daughter have a job?

1. Yes – 6
2. No – 1

How many hours per week do they work?

3. 15+ 4
4. 5-10 1
5. flexible 1
6. 0 1

Main reasons for working?

b) Money - 3
c) Independence – 4
d) Prepare for career – 1
e) Interest – 1
f) No job – study too important

How often do they miss college due to pressures of work?

b) Rarely – 2
c) Never - 5

Positive points about them working?

- Break from studying
- Money of their own
- Independence
- Outside interest
- Mixing with adults
- Life experience
- Responsibility
- Organisation and self-discipline
- Parents – knowing where he is
- Pay for his own leisure
- Using skills learned at work in college studies
- 'To be honest – I'd prefer him not to work so he could spend his time studying
- Working hours can be flexible

Negative points about working & studying?

- None apparent
- Takes time away from his studies frustration in timetabling
- Could be that there would be more interest in money than in college work
- So far – none – if we did see some we'd think hard about him/her not working
- When s/he is behind with essays – work seems to take preference, never the other way round

How do you feel that working effects their personal development and progress?

- Develops interpersonal skills
- Develops need for commitment to someone else other than himself
- Learns responsibility
- Learn how to handle personal finance
- More confident
- Enhances their life – meeting other people & dealing with other aspects of life
- Made to think of safety of others
- Having to organise him/herself and work – different from college where structures guide organisation
- Because s/he works with the public – having to be courteous to everyone regardless of age or status
- If he didn't work or if s/he did less hours – he may do more study at home. Though it has given him/her a respect for older people

For the students that worked, parent attitudes and perceptions were that work brought more independence for their child, gave them new skills (especially socially and regarding organising themselves) and money that they needed. Generally, parents viewed work as building experience for a later job and saw little in the way of negative points. Only one parent had difficulty and their relationship with the child was strained as a result of the child not responding to teacher pressure as he was behind with studies. He worked very long hours (up to 25 some weeks) but despite attending almost all lessons he gave priority outside of lessons to work and fell far behind. He eventually dropped out of two courses and then asked to stay on for a third year sixth in order to complete the courses then. The students in each case seemed to have a high level of control over their own decisions as to work or not. The parents were not involved with the decision at this stage. Each student had been working for between six months to one year.

Comparisons between parent & teacher interviews

On the whole parents and teachers agreed about the main positive effects of part-time work. However, teachers were more concerned about its effects on study.

In terms of the negative aspects of part-time work both parents and teachers agreed that work can take time away from study. However, parents did not raise issues such as missing deadlines, tiredness or too many hours of work. These points beg the question of whether teachers should be more precise in expressing their concerns to parents about part-time work.

Student survey results

Of the 70 questionnaires issued, 38 were returned.

- Over 50 per cent (20) of the respondents admitted to having a part-time job, of which two-thirds worked more than ten hours per week.

- In all cases, needing the money was the reason – 19 of them 'for themselves' and one 'to help the family'.

- The average pay was £3.20 an hour.

- The places of work were within local shops, mainly Safeways, which operates an employment policy of a minimum of 16 hours per week.

- In relation to time spent on 'home study', the results show that more 'workers' spend eight or more hours per week on 'home study' than those in the 'non-workers group.

- Of the 20 workers, three said their job did affect their studies, 17 said it did not.

Focus group discussion (with eight Year 12 and 13 students)
Why are you in the sixth form?

- *I need grades for my chosen career.*
- *Next step for what I want to do.*
- *A route through to my next course.*
- *Friends – I want to keep my social life.*
- *I'd feel like a drop out if I got a job, that's what my friends would say.*
- *I felt as though I had to! Subconscious expectations from my teachers.*
- *Friends asked me 'which college are you going to?' It seems the thing to do nowadays.*

What pressures do you feel you are under?

- *Parents moan re: study.*
- *Teachers moan re: study.*
- *If I've no money they (parents) say I should get a job.*

What are your aspirations/ambitions/aims? (Listed points are not student quotes.)

- University, nurse + car.
- Specialist college for a customs and excise job.
- Job – to get financially secure, buy a house.
- Get a place, not big stuff – a dog, a car – not flash.
- Travel industry – high position, undecided but possibly no university.
- I don't see uni as automatic gateway to good job. I know people who have degrees and no or rubbish jobs some with no qualifications and great job. They have experience, contacts, personality and are willing to learn.
- All want to buy a house not rent.

One of the eight did not work at all; two stopped work after about six months in sixth form. One said he would rather not work if he had a choice.

Why don't you work?

- *I can't get a job.*
- *Didn't enjoy it and the pay was rubbish.*

Why do the rest work?

- *Don't want to sponge off mum.*
- *Money to go out, buy clothes.*

What about work, what do you think, can work and study go well together?

- *I see my working friends as happy. They have money and they have kept their friends.*
- *It would be nice to work – go home and not worry about homework or anything else.*
- *Work and study – if we worked less, there'd be no money or grotty grades.*
- *Some people can mix it – it's down to the individuals.*
- *Study is a personal/individual thing – down to the self-drive of the student – an individual thing as I said before.*
- *I'd advise Year 11s to work only at weekends when they come into the sixth form (all nodded agreement).*

Study, are you studying hard enough to get your deserved grades?

(Five of the eight said 'No' and one said since giving up work, yes but not before)

- *Having the time does not always mean study.*
- *Freedom at college – distractions, student choice = less work. Need to be bossed about.*
- *Yeah, but I'm being over bossed!*
- *I work better at home, less distractions.*
- *I work better at college as it's a working environment.*
- *Each teacher wants their subject to be the best work done.*
- *I want a PWR (planner/diary) system like lower school.*
- *There's too much pressure – parents – work, study and house stuff to do for parents.*
- *I'm lucky, no pressure from parents.*

These responses suggest that students need external motivation but are reluctant to be motivated by teachers – too much moaning 'not being treated as an adult'.

What distracts you from your studies out of lessons?

- Friends/social
- My job
- TV
- Internet

Why don't you meet deadlines?

- *Not pushed enough by teachers*
- *Work – no time to myself – too tired*

- *Working on other work due in*
- *Social events*
- *Not enjoying the project/assignment*
- *Not having been told how much personal study to do*
- *Disorganised*
- *Lazy*
- *Don't understand it*
- *Too much work set*
- *No spare time*
- *I do!*

Did you understand the level of study needed at sixth form?

- *No*
- *No, it was a real jump. From yr 9 to 10/11 it was gradual. A Level = huge leap!*
- *No, no one explained it enough*
- *No, if it was explained, we didn't listen, we weren't interested then. It didn't mean anything then.*

How does staying at Rickstones effect your approach to study?

- *I stayed because I knew the teachers and they knew me. I'd be able to get help.*
- *Casual, students know the teachers and can get help so they sit back a bit.*
- *Yeah, you can get away with a bit.*
- *In a strange college, we'd work harder for teachers you don't know well.*
- *Yeah, but you don't work for substitute teachers though, so sometimes knowing teachers helps.*

What would be your reasons for going or not going to University?

No:

- *Strange people, scary.*
- *Loans, debts, no incentive.*
- *Intelligence needed.*
- *Can't decide what I want to do yet.*
- *Pressure to decide from everyone.*
- *Comes too soon.*
- *Can be trained at work, even as a part timer.*
- *Homesick.*

Yes:

- *Sponsorship.*
- *Knowing what I want.*
- *Highly enthusiastic about my chosen subject.*
- *Want to meet people, gain new confidence.*

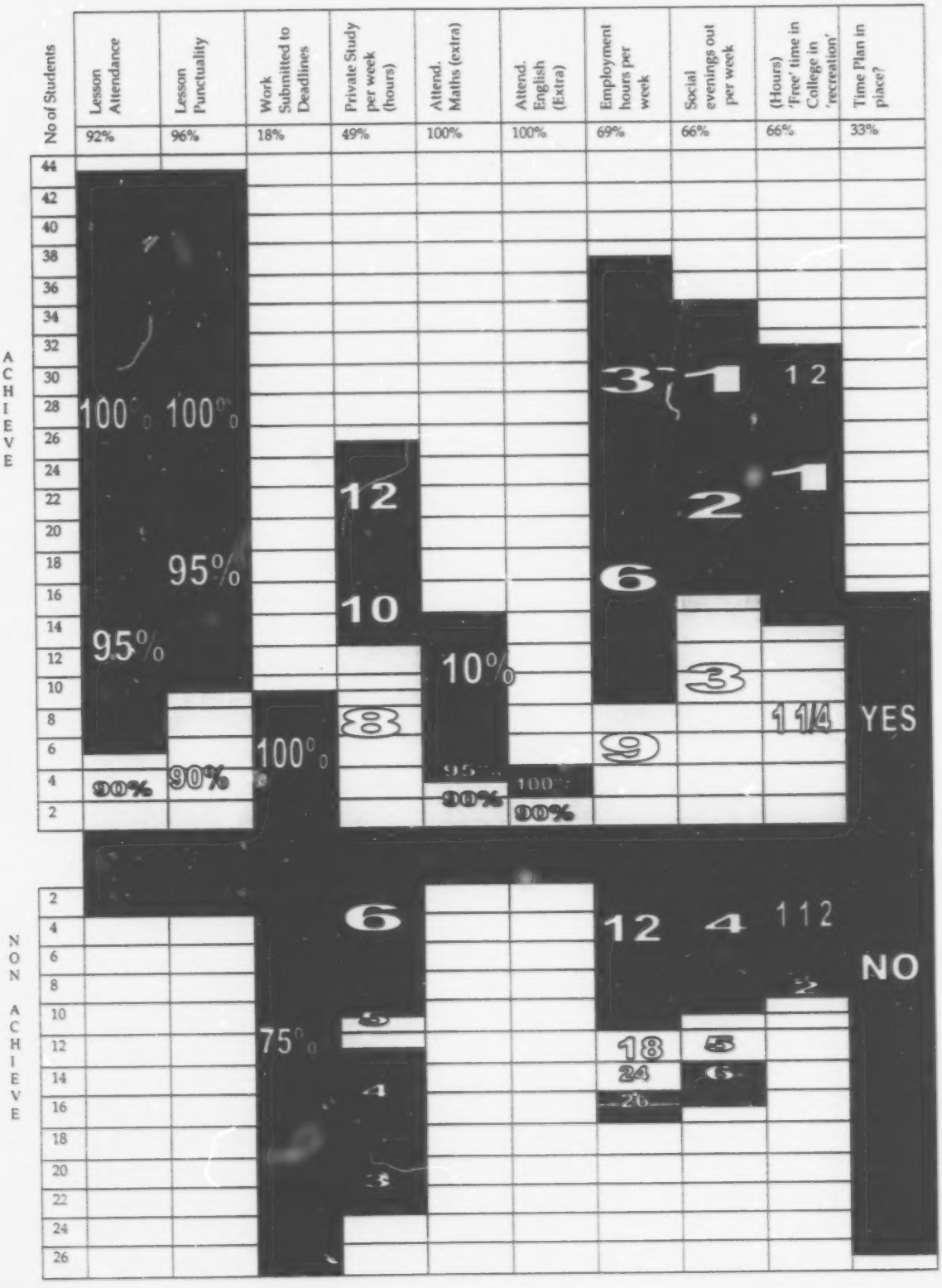
Four said they would travel away to university, far enough to stay there – 2-5 hours away.

Four said they would want to stay close.

This discussion was held some two months after the initial questionnaire and more had been explained to the students about the project. The results from this and the student profile sheet give a clearer picture as to the actual perceptions and work involvement of the students.

Student profile results (51 returns)

This table summarises the results of 51 student profile sheets which are given out to advanced level students.



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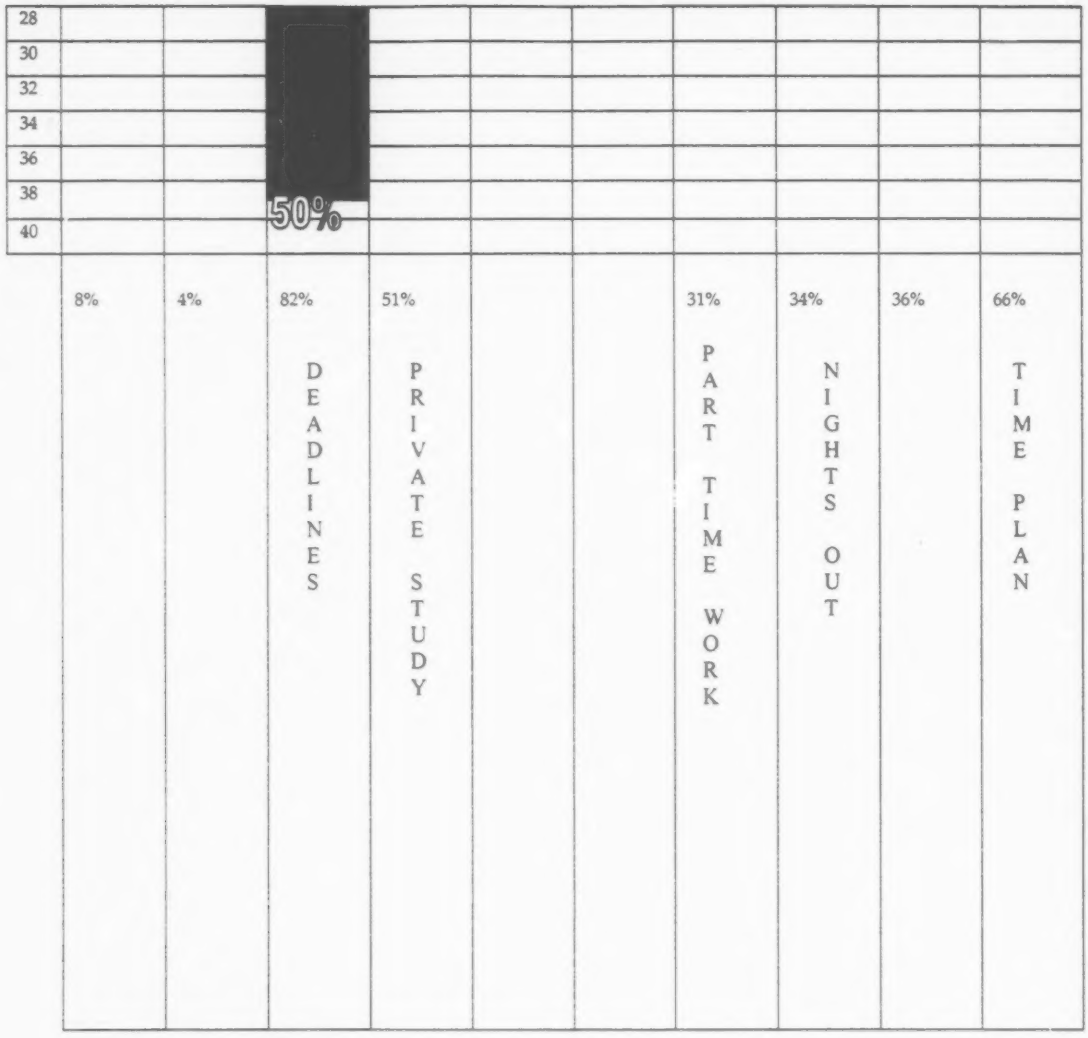


The section above the black line indicates the numbers of students who are on target in achieving their potential. The section below is those who are 'off target'.

From the above table, it can be seen that missed deadlines are a major concern. The areas that appear to influence this are part time work, social commitments, insufficient private study and no time planning. This could only be verified through further study to ascertain whether these factors were common to the students that were missing deadlines.

Implications for action

- More targeted advice in Year 11 regarding the level of work, and the time required for private study
- Closer monitoring of course progress and part time work being carried out
- Implementation of student profile form intermittently during each year to raise awareness of student achievement.
- More structured tutorial programme to link student profile form to ALIS predictions, progress reports each half term and full reports written twice a year to use as a tool in student guidance/counselling.

- Address lack of student planning and meeting of deadlines.
- Identify 'at risk' students as soon as possible – Year 11 and early Year 12 with monitoring of Year 13 particularly in lead up to examination times. How much are they working, when and is it effecting their progress/achievement?
- Address this situation in the light of *Curriculum 2000* – will the new courses keep more students on track as they have less 'free time'?
- Set up a team to include senior managers to get the ideas implemented.
- Strategies need to be implemented at the most appropriate times of the year.

Further research

More individual research and focus discussion groups on student perception and attitudes regarding study expectations in Years 10, 11, 12 and 13.

Parent interviews covering the same age range as above.

Conduct a consultation amongst parents, staff and students as to how the balance between work and study may be improved. Having established that working/earning is a trend associated with social 'pressures' as is staying on at sixth form level, greater information, and knowledge will empower all parties to deal effectively with the situation. In order to gain co-operation and ownership of any change or implementation of ideas, the relevant parties need to be involved.

St Mark's West Essex Catholic School, Harlow

Ann Lawler

School context

St Mark's is an 11-18 years Catholic Comprehensive in the heart of Harlow, the only secondary school of six to retain its sixth form. From September 1999 the school became Voluntary Aided under the Catholic Diocese of Brentwood, having been Grant Maintained prior to this date.

The school is oversubscribed in year 7, with GCSE results rising from 28 per cent 5 +A*-C in 1994 to 41 per cent 5+ A*-C in 1999. A Level results have risen from 60 per cent A-E in 1994 to 92.5 per cent A-E in 1998 with a dip to 65 per cent A-E in 1999, although it has to be said that the on entry scores for the latter cohort were estimated at 18 per cent A-E. The sixth form currently offers 15 A Level subjects with access to a further 5/6 at the local college.

The research project

The research into part-time employment with sixth formers became a useful adjunct to the review of sixth form provision at St. Mark's. It provided staff and students with the opportunity to discuss the issue of balancing study and part-time work.

The key investigation questions were:

1. What percentage of part time work does the sixth form undertake?
2. What percentage of time is allocated to study in and out of school time?
3. What are student perceptions of the importance and relevance of part time work?
4. What are student perceptions of the importance of study time?
5. In what ways do students who have part time jobs manage work and study commitments?

The first strand of research was a survey and a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was sent to all Year 12 and 13 students. The second strand of the research involved a series of Focus group meetings (see Appendix 2) with randomly selected groups from year 12 and 13 (two from each). In addition, two individual progress interviews were held with under achieving year 12 A Level students who were incidentally working an inordinate amount of hours in part time employment

Research findings

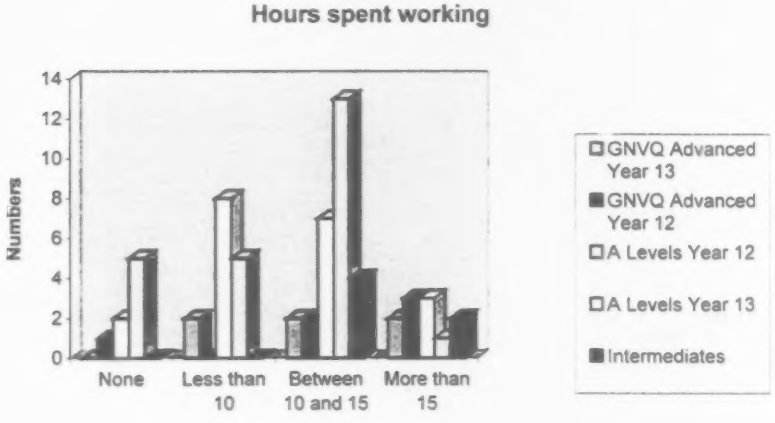
Section A - about the students

The following returns were received from students:

Year	Gender	Programme Studied	
12	20 Female	GNVQ Advanced Year 12	6
12	14 Male	GNVQ Intermediate Year 12	7
13	13 Female	A Levels Year 12	21
13	17 Male	GNVQ Advanced Year 13	6
		A Levels Year 13	24

Section B - the work that students do in the sixth form

How many hours a week do you spend on part time work?



A small minority of students from each programme category work for more than 15 hours which clearly gives some cause for concern (ten per cent in Year 13 rising to 23.5 per cent in Year 12)

Programme	Hours worked	Hours worked	Hours worked
GNVQ Advanced Year 12	1 worked 15	1 worked 20	1 worked 19 1 worked 16
GNVQ Advanced Year 13	1 worked 29	1 worked 18	
A Levels Year 12	1 worked 17	2 worked 20	1 worked 26
A Levels Year 13	1 worked 18		
Intermediate	1 worked 19	1 worked 30	

Of the students working these hours, one Intermediate student was working night shifts as well as trying to complete his GNVQ programme, but has since given up some of his work in order to catch up with the programme. Two of the A Level students in Year 12 are falling behind with their work. One has serious financial difficulties, the other has dropped to two A Levels and is now a cause for concern in a second subject.

A small number of students do not work at all (8.82 per cent in Year 12 and 16.6 per cent in Year 13). Two students made some interesting comments about this:

'As long as I am in full time education there is no need to work. I don't feel like working part time. I've got my sixth form work to do and I wouldn't let part time work get in the way'.

'A friend worked a lot and did not do well in his exams and so I didn't want to be like him. He had admitted that he had substituted work for school'.

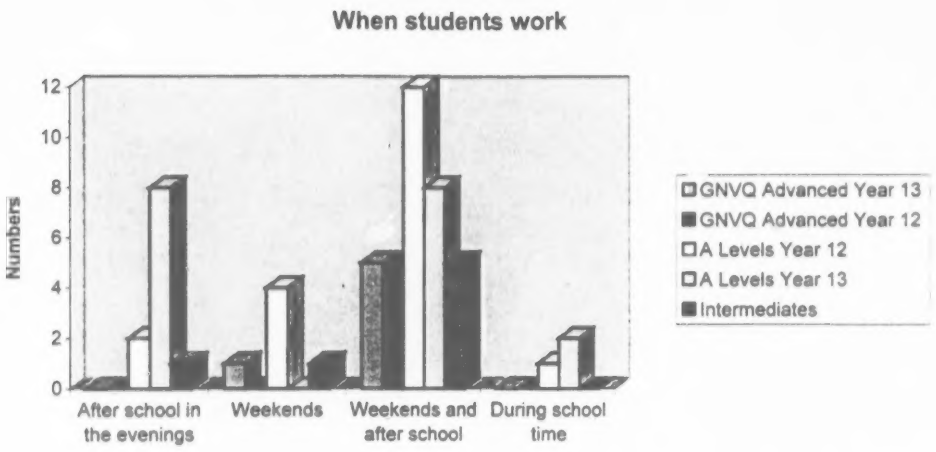
The power of a peer role model may be worth using in the future!

When do you work?

The majority of students work both at weekends and in the evening. The previous Head of Sixth Form tried to restrict the amount of sixth form part-time work but was met with considerable resistance from the students partially because of his autocratic approach. Students also quickly realised that the rule was difficult to monitor. When asked about restricting part time work one Year 13 student commented:

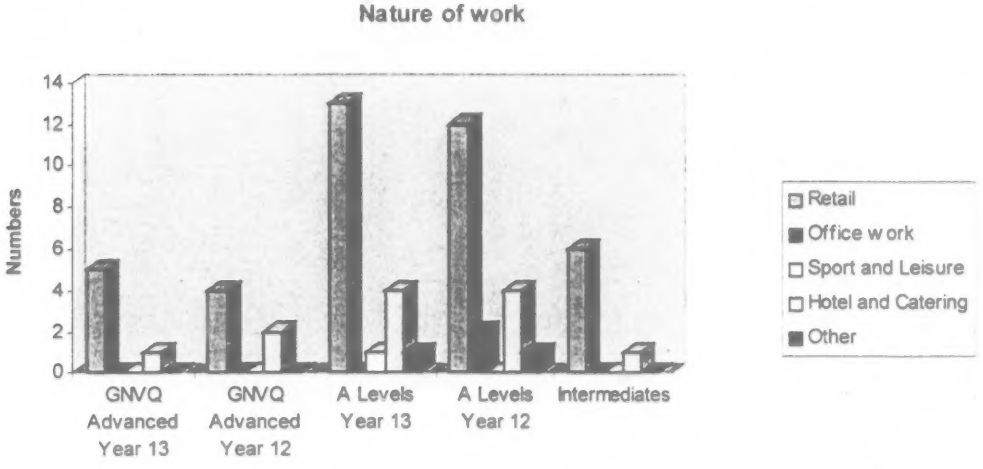
'It happened last year but was not followed up'.

Clearly this has implications for monitoring.



The nature of the work students undertake

Retail is the most common form of work. Some students work in the catering industry and it is often here that students work late nights. Some work up until 11 pm in restaurants and then come into school the next day clearly tired.



One Year 12 student helps his brother in a roofing business and one A Level Year 13 student works in theatre, an area that she hopes to study at university.

Apart from money, what is the *main* reason for the work that you do?
Although money was the overriding reason for part time work, students also gave the following reasons for maintaining a part time job:

Enjoyment	Interaction with colleagues	Gaining an insight into industry
A break form work	A confidence booster	
To obtain references	Parental pressure	To pick up a trade if A Levels are not achieved
To gain experience	To learn skills	
A break from school work		

These results show some indication that students do see the relevance of part time work in relation to skill development, experiencing the world of work and gaining an insight into the industry. Some of the responses to the focus group questions confirm student perceptions of the importance of part time jobs. When they were asked *'What prompted you to start work?'* some students replied:

- skills
- independence
- transferring skills from school e.g. problem solving and communication skills
- meeting new friends and people.

When students were asked in the focus group sessions *'What's it like to work?'* Some year 12 students indicated that they were able to:

'Grow up and learn to cope alone'.
'Transfer skills from school e.g. problem solving and communication skills'
'Manage time keeping and meeting deadlines which you have to do at work and you realise why you have been taught this at school'
'Chance to have a new opportunity e.g. head waiter'.

The emphasis on skill development also became apparent when students were discussing the advantages and disadvantages of applying to university. The issue of learning a skill as opposed to learning about a subject was seen as more important by several Year 12 girls.

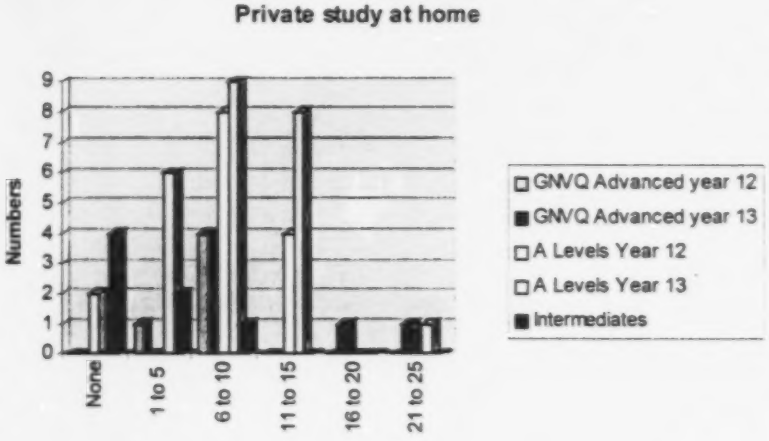
Study time and part time work

It is quite interesting to note that the GNVQ Intermediate students prefer to study at school, but they do have a small base room. Students in Year 13, in the main, prefer to study at home, although this could be to do with the fact that there are no designated sixth form areas for private study except for available free classrooms, a shared library and the Sixth Form Common room. The latter has traditionally been used as a social area.

Students appear to be studying the minimum number of hours at school. This could be for the above reasons but it might also suggest that here is a lack of a 'learning culture' amongst the sixth form.

	GNVQ Advanced year 12	GNVQ Advanced year 13	A Levels Year 12	A Levels Year 13	Intermediates
None	0	0	2	0	0
1 to 5	1	3	0	15	3
6 to 10	3	3	8	7	3
11 to 15	2	0	4	2	1
16 to 20	0	0	0	0	0
21 to 25	0	0	0	0	0

When asked about amount of hours spent on private study at home the results showed that the majority of students work no more than 6 to 10 hours a week at home (Year 13 - 39 per cent and year 12 - 42 per cent). In comparison with private study at home 60 per cent of Year 13 work no more than five hours at school and 33.3 per cent work between 6 to 10 hours. In Year 12, 51 per cent work at school for between 6 to 10 hours. On reflection it would have been useful to have established the total amount of hours spent on private study.

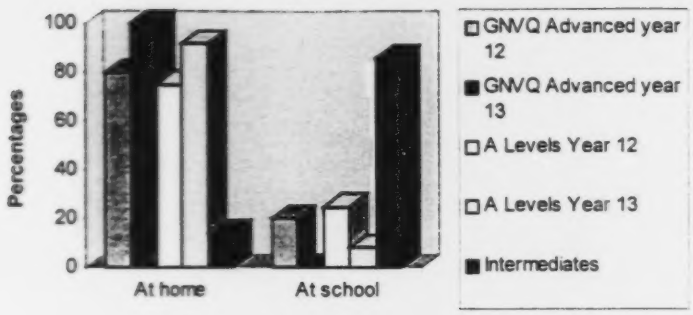


It is of some concern that two A Level Year 12 students are doing no private study at home and that only four Year 12 students are doing more than ten hours a week at home, despite the fact that their preferences for study are at home.

The next question asked about preferences for study in terms of home or school.

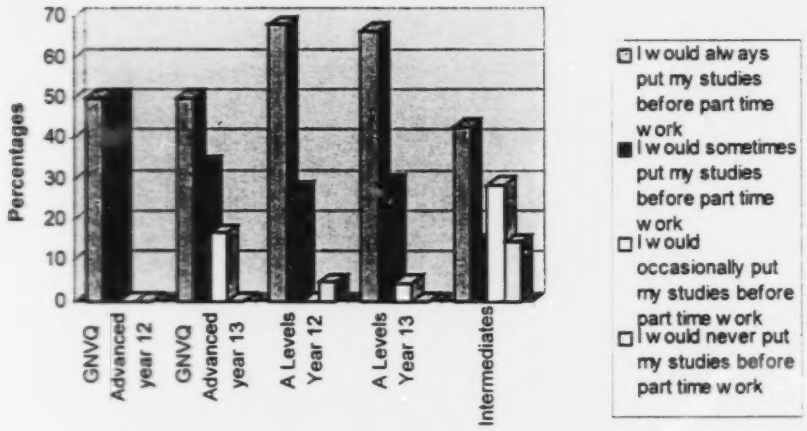
The vast majority of all students surveyed preferred to study at home with a total reverse in the case of the Intermediate level students

Home /school study preferences



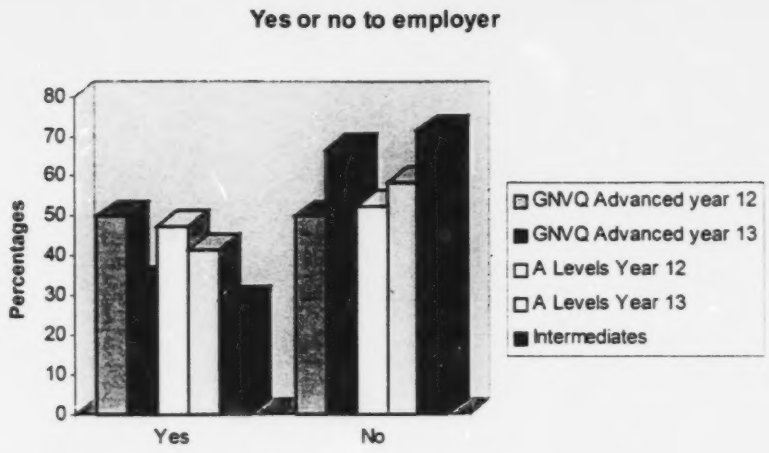
The final three questions asked students to look at their part time work in relation to their study habits in an attempt to identify perceptions of the two. The first question asked them to decide the extent to which they would put their part time study before their work.

Studies before part time work



A Level students seem more likely to put studies before part time work. Sixty three per cent of the Year 13 and 62 per cent of the Year 12 students surveyed said they would always put their studies before their part time work. However, only half of GNVQ Advanced students indicated that they would always put their studies before their part-time work.

The next question asked *'If an employer asked you to go into work for double pay and an essay were due in the next day, would you say yes or no to the employer?*



Students were quite mixed in their responses to this question but it is interesting to note that a significant percentage of students in each programme area would go into work if an essay were due in. The focus group questions revealed some comments that also indicate a mixed response to attitudes to work and part time employment.

The students were asked *'If your manager asks you to do more work and an essay is due in the next day, how would you react?'*

The replies for the Year 12 students could broadly be grouped into three categories of those who would do the essay, those who would work and then stay up late and do the essay and those who would leave the homework (these last students were in a minority).

Year 13 students responded differently. Their responses indicated that the school work was as important as the money and that they would try to negotiate a balance between the two.

When students were asked *'If it is Saturday and you woke up with a hangover, would you go into work the next day?'* The students replied almost unanimously that they would go into work. When students were asked about going into school after a hangover, however, their replies indicated that they might consider missing a lesson depending on its importance to them and who the teacher was. Explanations offered by the students suggested that this was not because the school was less important than work, but that teachers were more understanding.

The penultimate question asked to students in the questionnaire survey and the focus group questions aimed to find out what advice students would give to younger pupils coming into the sixth form about mixing part-time study with work.

In the main the results revealed that students felt that part time work was both necessary and worthwhile, as long as it was manageable. The responses could broadly be grouped into four categories:

Work part time because of the social and financial gains	Restrict the amount of part time work	Put studies first	Ensure part time work is flexible
• Do part time work because if you don't work and don't go out you will lead a sad life and have poor social skills. • If I didn't work I would not survive financially • Do get a part time job as you'll get valuable experience, although you must put studies first.	• Don't work too many hours • Don't work too many hours and don't let employers take advantage of your age • Keep work to weekends • Resist the temptation to work more hours	• Never put work before study • Give up job in year 13 • Ensure hours fit in with study, leaving enough time to work at home • Don't let it interfere with homework	• Ensure hours worked are very flexible • Arrange part time work properly to include free time and study time • Compromise with manager

The final question students were asked in the focus group sessions concerned their feeling about the school restricting the amount of part time work undertaken. On the whole students were adamant that they did not want to have restrictions placed on them because it would infringe their freedom.

'It's nothing to do with school'.
'The sixth form is voluntary and therefore you shouldn't be told what to do'.
'As long as you do your schoolwork there should not be a problem'.

Implications for action by the school as a result of the research findings

A number of points have arisen from the findings that have future implications for the school sixth form.

Although most students are working between 10 and 15 hours a week, there is some concern about the small percentage of students who are working more than this. Some of these students are already in discussion with the Head of Sixth Form and are aware of the fact that they are unlikely to succeed if this continues. Clearly early identification of the problem needs to be addressed at the beginning of the year.

In a similar vein, the findings show that there are a significant number of students who work both at weekends and in the evening. Whilst student concerns about freedoms and privileges have to be acknowledged, they also need to be made aware of the fact that they are reducing their chances of gaining good grades if they work too much. In fact, results from the qualitative data suggest students are aware of the need to put study before part time work. All the advice given from the reflective questions points to this but there does seem to be some dissonance in terms of the beliefs expressed when giving advice to younger students and their actual benaviour in relation to the amount of part time work undertaken. They believe too much part time work jeopardises their studies but they continue to work! It might be worth giving students more data about part time work in relation to actual results achieved. This would then provide them with more factual knowledge about the implications of part time work on study.

In relation to the amount of study in and out of school, there is clearly a need to address the issue of developing a 'learning culture' in the sixth form. This is not just a student issue but a whole-school one. The issues have to be solved within tight budget constraints in a small sixth form.

One solution would be to introduce more stringent monitoring arrangements for school study - ideally supervised private study (but there is some resistance to this in terms of cover implications) or getting staff to sign when students have completed school study work outside lessons. The introduction of a reward system might help some students to manage private study time more effectively. Quite simply students would be given a set period of time in school, including study time. If they cope well with this they could be allowed home to study for some time. The privilege could be withdrawn if not adhered to. Role modelling could also be used here, especially at induction.

There are implications for whole school sixth form policies on work ethos. The *Curriculum 2000* groups will make recommendations about cross-sixth form homework policy and assessment. The new reporting system has gone some way to achieving this but there is still much to be addressed in terms of giving students accurate and relevant feedback and 'SMART' targets. The role of the tutor is crucial in this process. The benefits of having a small sixth form enables tutors to see students on a more individual basis. The issue of part time work could thus be monitored as part of the tutor role.

Finally the issue of involving students in discussions about part time work has been received positively and should be continued as part of the tutor time. Striking a balance between dialogue and imposition would seem to be crucial to success.

Further areas meriting research in the school as a result of the findings

- Monitor 2001 results against amount of part time work undertaken - a case study of selected current Year 12 students.
- Expand part-time work survey to include Year 11 pupils.
- Review 2000/2001 monitoring systems against 2002 results.
- Monitor current Year 12 student participation in part time work during 2000/2001 matched against their study habits.

Appendix I

Focus Group Questions and Responses Year 12 Students

Question	Response Group One 6 Male and 2 Female	Response Group Two 3 Male and 4 Female	Response Group Three 2 Male and 4 Female	Response Group Four 2 Male and 3 Female
What prompted you to start work?	Money Mum wanted me to get a job Experience of the world of work Interaction with people Meeting people Prior to A Levels starting work to alleviate boredom	Three students in this group had not got a job. They gave the following reasons: As long as I am in full time education there is no need to work I don't feel like working part time. I've got my sixth form work to do and I wouldn't want to let part time work get in the way My mum pays! I have worked but only seasonally. If I'm desperate to buy something then I will work Four with jobs: Money Good experience Boredom from sitting at home Got a job through work experience and was a bonus to get paid!	Two students did not have part time jobs. Their responses were: Not bothered -- I'm too lazy A friend worked a lot and did not do well in his exams and so I did not want to be like him. He had admitted that he had substituted work for school. Those who did work: Money Mum made me get a job by giving me the application form Clothes and the desire to buy a car I was bored in the summer holidays Work is better than looking after my little sister	Money Experience Skills Job Meeting people References

Appendix 2

What is it like to work?	Fun Stressful - I am an evening 'filer' and if a file is lost I can get blamed Growing up and learning to cope alone Transferring skills from school e.g. problem solving and communication skills Time keeping and meeting deadlines which you have to do at work and you realise why you have been taught this at school Chance to have a new opportunity e.g. head waiter	It's different from school. You are treated as an adult and you have to act older than you are Behaviour is different at work because you have to watch what you say and how you say it. At work you have to meet deadlines Work is too much effort and too stressful Social, school and part time work lead to stress and then lack of commitment for schoolwork because you are tired and have little time	All right but sometimes I don't want to work in the evenings Sometimes they hassle you to do extra work and this gives you grief that you do not need. People take advantage of you because they have to pay you less I felt exploited because I was paid £1.96 per hour and getting up at 5 am and working 12 hour shifts each weekend. The social aspects keep me there and I became addicted to the money even though the job was awful.	Stressful because too much is expected of you It's tiring I'd rather be at home - I only work because I have to
If your manager asks you to do more work and an essay is due in the next day, how would you react?	Work accepts that I have to do the essay Work = money, but A Levels = better work and more money and so the answer must be to do the essay there is pressure to work at McDonalds I'd figure out if I could do	I would do the extra part time work and then stay up until midnight to do the work I wouldn't work I would leave the homework I would work then get up early to do the essay I would work and then	Explain to them that I have an essay and don't work Do work- but it depends on what stage I had got to in the essay planning - If I was half way through I would work and then do the essay later I would haggle and if the employer made it	I say no to any extra hours I only say yes if I'm desperate for money I only say yes if I'm bored at home or if its during the holidays No I wouldn't do the work I'd make sure the essay was done because at the end of the day I want a career and

	the essay and weigh up the demands of the job (at the Co-op) and take the work with me	do the essay in the evening Rather do the job and then stay up late eg until two in the morning and get the essay done	worthwhile then I'd work and then either hand the essay in late or do it at lunch time or evening	therefore the essay is more important
Some people would suggest that students are put under pressure by employers to work more hours. How would you feel if this were you?	You cannot be taken advantage of You should look at your contract of employment, seek out the manager and discuss this with him	Yes and I do go in I did this which made me very tired and I was annoyed with the employer because it was just expected of me Employers perceive that we do very little at school when they see our timetable I'm scared of my manager and end up agreeing to work They take for granted what we have to do at school	I'm already under pressure because I'm paid less They think we are easier to persuade They gradually up the hours so the I am doing 13-15 per week	Pressure in terms of more responsibility The manager phones you and cries to get you to come in
If it is Saturday and you woke up with a hangover, would you go into work?	7 yes and 1 no If I went in I'd be really moody	The majority said yes (five) It depends on time If I'd had little time off then I'd take a day I don't like to let them down	5 said yes and 1 said no You have a responsibility to work It's up to you to take the rough with the smooth The manager would not be impressed if you did not go in	4 yes and 1 no It's gone in an hour You're letting people down Mum would make me go Money and fear of getting the sack I'd stay in the night before I work on a Sunday and don't go out on a Saturday

If it's Monday and you woke up with a hangover and had to be in school for a lesson, would you attend?	2 yes and 6 no I don't like missing lessons If I fell asleep in the lesson I would catch up later It depends on the lesson, if it's maths I would not go	6 yes and 1 no If I felt bad I wouldn't come in I would do the lesson and then go into the common room to recover The teachers would be more understanding than employers I'd go in later in the day	3 yes and 3 no Get up and have 5 more minutes I would come in but probably be late There is less pressure put on you at school	3 no and 2 yes At school still have to concentrate and therefore with a hangover you could not do this I'd copy up the notes I'd come into school to prove to my parents that I can handle the drink
What advice would you give a year 11/12 student about mixing part time work with sixth form study?	Keep a balance 'Sponge' off your dad Tell them to do both because one complements the other, but to get priorities right and not let one out-do the other Before you start work make your manager aware of your school commitments	Be careful what you do and tell your boss Just work at weekends Tell them not to do too many hours	Do a minimum amount of hours Stick to the hours you originally agreed Resist the temptation to do more hours Make time for school work	Get a weekend job only Suggest do Saturday and 1/2 evenings in the week Don't work all weekend because it leaves no time for school work I'd say just work one day and then 'sponge' off parents Depends on how you work - - If I didn't work at weekends I wouldn't do school work anyway Compromise with manager about times of work
A lot of sixth forms try to restrict the amount of hours that students should work part time.	It is not their position to do that At an age where we are told we are independent on the one hand and then telling us what to do on the other hand would be unfair	I think this is fair enough because you should be committed to school I'd leave I'd be annoyed	It's nothing to do with school The sixth form is voluntary and therefore you shouldn't be told what to do. As long as you do your schoolwork there should	I'd leave the sixth form Some couldn't cope without a part time job Some are on income support and therefore need jobs I'd accept this and tell my parents If I didn't have a job I

How would you feel if this were the case at St Mark's?	If I can do part time work in my own time then there is no reason why I shouldn't		not be a problem.	wouldn't go out I'd feel like a hermit I wouldn't do more work - I'd laze around Part time work motivates me more to do school work I work a seven-day week and I use the holidays to recover and relax. Just as my motivation drops a holiday comes along!

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Focus Group Questions and Responses Year 13 students

Question	Response Group One Five Male and Two Female	Response Group Two Six Male
1. **Some people would suggest that students have been put under pressure by employers to work more hours. How would you feel if this were you?**	I'd say no The general consensus from the group was not to be put under pressure by the employer	I wouldn't do it I'd do the work to shut up the manager I'd work to my contracted hours No I'd negotiate It's difficult because you are working in a team and you feel that you are letting the others down if you say no.
2. **If it is Saturday and you woke up with a hangover, would you go into work?**	Yes Need money to get the drink for the next hangover You realise it is your own fault so you go in	A unanimous yes with the proviso that it would depend on how bad they were feeling
3. **If it's Monday and you woke up with a hangover and had to be in school for a lesson, would you attend?**	Depends on the lesson If you go in late then there is always time to catch up Depends what is going on and which lesson I wouldn't come in Can usually catch up with schoolwork whereas at work you lose money. There is more hassle at work than at school Work are more suspicious School are more trusting	Depends on the teacher. The stricter the teacher the more likely you are to go in
4. **What advice would you give a year 11/12 student about mixing part time work with sixth form study?**	Do part time work, because if you don't work you don't go out and you will lead a sad life and have poor social skills Keep work to weekends Don't ever work an eight hour shift Work one day at the weekend and one evening	If I didn't work I wouldn't survive financially Part time work is really useful for case study Don't do too much part time work 14 hours per week

	You need to think about your future and therefore school should be your priority	10-12 hours Eight hours But it all depends on the wages - more money -less work I work a lot and enjoy it but do regret the fact that my school work has suffered
5. A lot of sixth forms try to restrict the amount of hours that students should work part time. How would you feel if this were the case at St Mark's?	No It's up to you It's your life You know your limits Better to give guidelines	It happened last year but was not followed up 18 years old and therefore need to make own decisions. It is nothing to do with school sometimes work put you under pressure in that if you work less than 10 hours you might be asked to leave
6. What prompted you to start work?	Money My mum Career choice All my friends work Gives me independence	Money Parents made me work Knowing that you get something out of it Experience Not enough money from mum and dad Forced into work to buy things Social contact
7. What's it liked to work?	Fun Given the choice I'd stay at home Draining Meet friends discounts	Awful - we have to wear a green uniform Meet new friends Meet new people Fun is important
8. If your manager asks you to do more work and an essay is due in the next day, how would you react?	No If a Sunday and it' double time pay, I might do it. If I could rearrange times so that I can do the essay I'd ask if I could hand in the essay late	No I've got an assignment Depends on how badly I needed the money and how much he's offering eg double time, then I'd consider it Either not go to school the next day and hand the essay in later or fake illness

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St Peter's High School, Burnham-on-Crouch

Glen Michael

School context

St. Peter's High School is a rural co-educational, comprehensive school in the south-east corner of Essex. The sixth form numbers 170 (out of a school total of about 1300). There is a roughly equal split between students taking A Level and GNVQ courses.

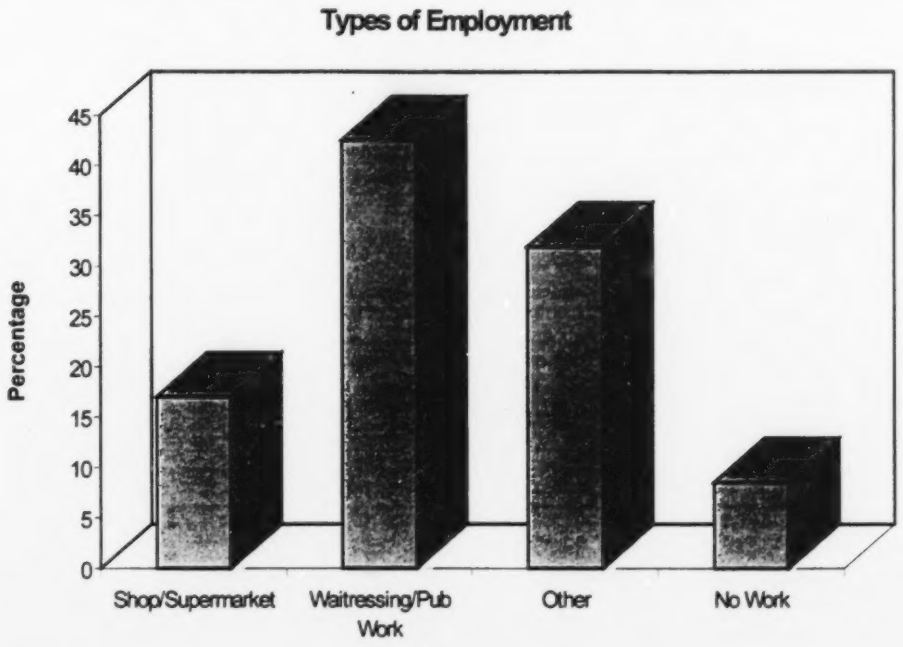
The majority of the students live outside the main town of Burnham-on-Crouch. With Essex County Council charging post-16 students for school buses and public transport being scarce, a large proportion of the sixth form students chose to run their own cars and motor bikes, both for getting to school and for socialising.

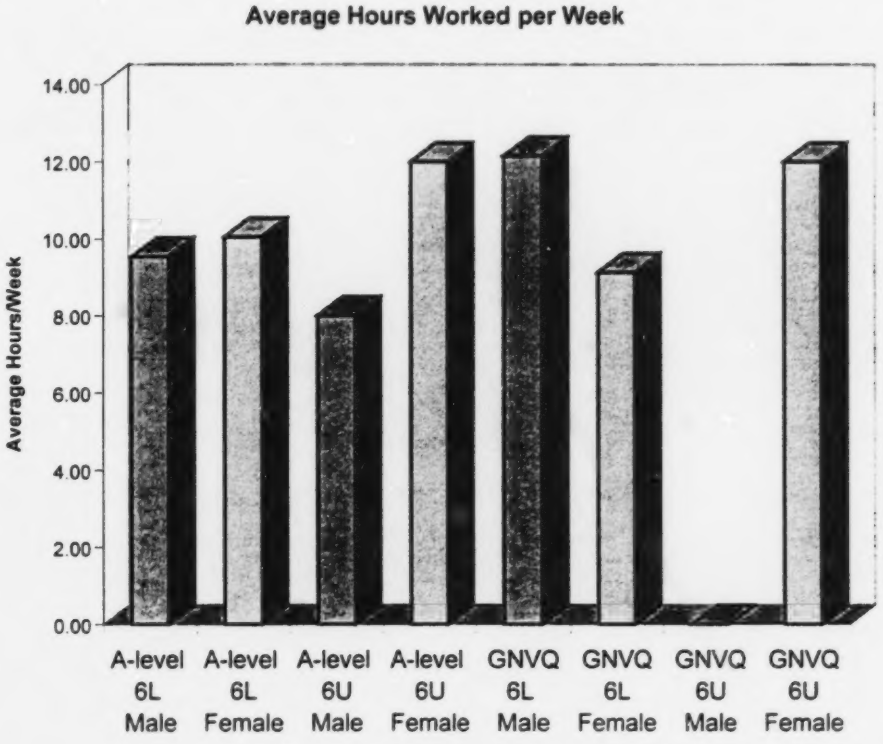
The research project

This survey was carried out during the spring term of 2000. The number of students surveyed was about 50 per cent of the student body and was reasonably representative of the whole. However, some of the categories were rather small, especially those in the upper sixth because of the imminent examinations. Nevertheless, some of the general findings do make interesting reading and do highlight the fact that the majority of students chose to accept the added pressure of part-time employment in addition to their further education.

The most surprising finding was that only nine per cent of the students surveyed did not have any part-time work at all. This really does need to be taken into account when advising students on study skills.

There is only one relatively small supermarket in Burnham-on-Crouch and this serves the whole catchment area. Also, there is no real shopping precinct in the area. As a result, the percentage of students working in retail type jobs is relatively small (17 per cent). Burnham-on-Crouch is a major yachting centre with four large yacht clubs and also attracts many tourists. Consequently, there is a lot of part-time employment in the catering, waitressing and pub-work line. This accounted for nearly half (43 per cent) of our students jobs. The 'other' jobs included: farm labouring; life-guarding in the local swimming pools; tyre-fitting; cleaning and simply baby-sitting.


Types of Employment
Percentage
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Shop/Supermarket
Waitressing/Pub Work
Other
No Work

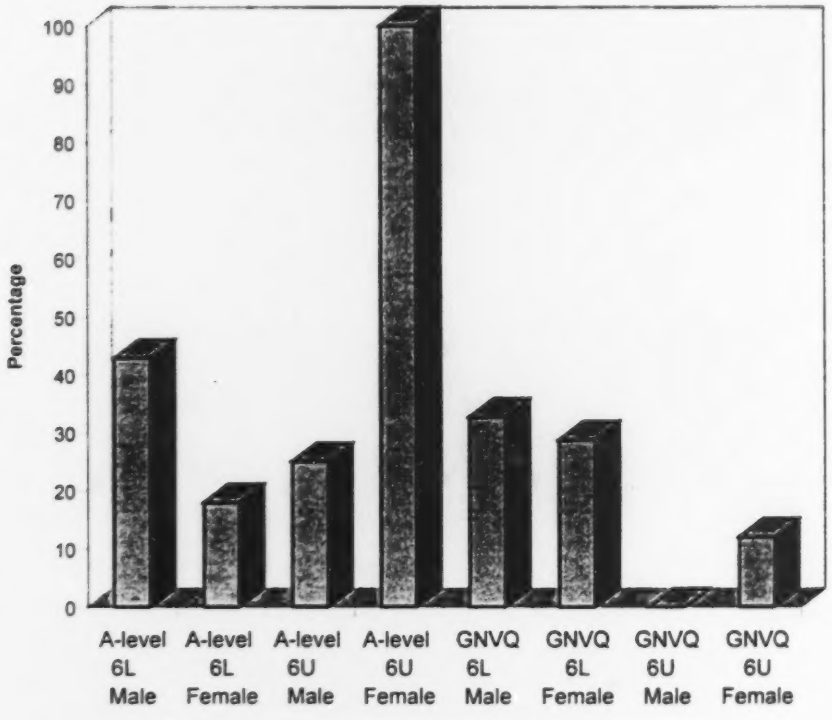

Average Hours Worked per Week
Average Hours/Week
14.00
12.00
10.00
8.00
6.00
4.00
2.00
0.00
A-level 6L Male
A-level 6L Female
A-level 6U Male
A-level 6U Female
GNVQ 6L Male
GNVQ 6L Female
GNVQ 6U Male
GNVQ 6U Female

The actual hours worked varied from two hours per week (baby-sitting) up to a staggering 45 hours per week (farm-labouring). The latter is the equivalent of many full-time jobs.

In the categories in the above bar-chart, the average number of hours worked per week was fairly consistent (between 8 to 12 hours per week). The anomaly for males in the second year of GNVQ courses was simply because none was present when the survey took place. There was surprisingly little difference between gender, type of course or year on course. The overall average for all those surveyed was 10.4 hours per week - the equivalent of two full school days.

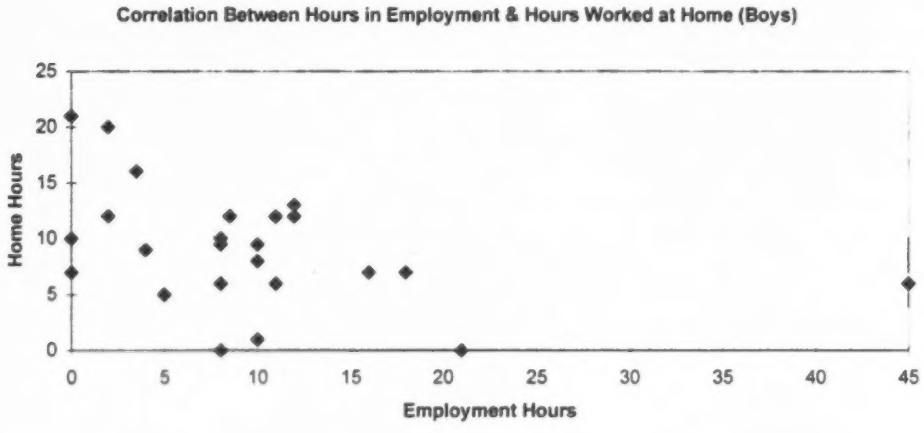
Discussion showed that very few students in the upper sixth stopped working or reduced their hours in preparation for their terminal examinations. They seemed quite prepared to accept the increased work-load and the consequence of potentially lower final grades. Experience has shown that rather than reduce their employment hours they tend to reduce their attendance at school (often even missing lessons) with the excuse that '*I can revise better at home*'.

Percentage of Hours Worked Monday to Friday

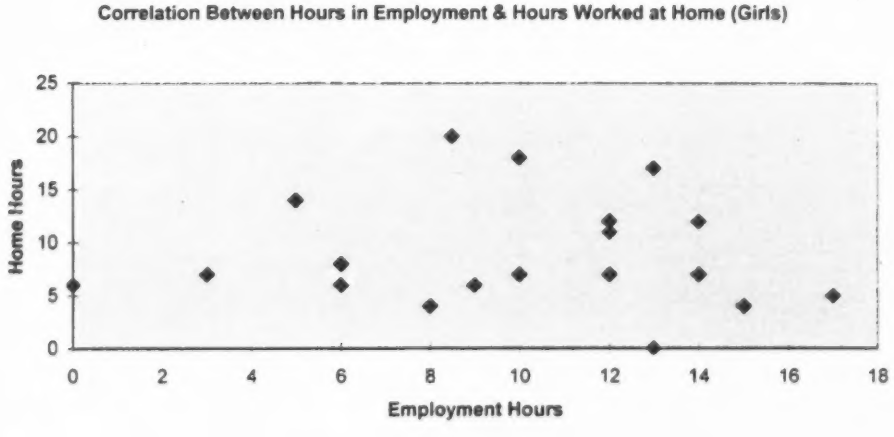


There was a wide variation in the hours worked Monday to Friday as opposed to weekends. The variation was from 100 per cent Monday to Friday to 100 per cent at weekends. The data did show that 37 per cent of the students did follow the general advice that any employment should be at weekends rather than during school day mornings/evenings.

The average overall was that only 32 per cent of the total hours worked were during school days. Again, there seemed little difference between gender, type of course or year of course. (The anomalies for males in the second year of a GNVQ course and females in the second year of A Level courses was due to zero and very small sample sizes respectively.)



In the case of male students the data and plotted points do suggest that there is some relationship between the number of hours that they work on their part-time job per week and the number of hours that they spend at home per week on school work. The surprising thing is that there is the suggestion of a negative correlation. The data gives a correlation coefficient of -0.40. The more hours that they spend on their part-time employment the less the number of hours that they will spend on school work at home. This may be because there are a definite number of hours that must be spent on their social life and the rest of their free time is divided between employment and school work as necessary.



However, in the case of female students there appears to be no such relationship at all. The data gives a correlation coefficient of only -0.03. Girls seem much more individualistic. In both cases though, much more data is required to be confident about any such relationships that there may or may not be.

Conclusions

It would appear that post-16 students nowadays have an expectation that they must have money to allow themselves to indulge in a social life that revolves around cars, pubs and clubs, together with all the necessary fashion accessories.

They seem quite prepared to spend often a large number of hours in part-time employment to earn this money. However, this can have a detrimental effect on the number of hours that they also spend on school work.

In the survey, about two thirds of those who worked in part-time jobs felt that this did not affect their school work. When advised that part-time employment was likely to reduce their final grades all seemed fully prepared to accept this consequence.

Type of course and the year into the course appears to make little difference to a students attitudes. There may be a gender difference, however. There is a suggestion that boys show an inverse relationship between the number of hours spent on their part-time job and the number of hours spent on school work at home. Girls seem much more individualistic in this matter.

It must be born in mind that any conclusions are based on a relatively small amount of data. It would be interesting to see the results of a much bigger and fuller survey on a county or national scale.

Finally, I feel that it must be now accepted that part-time employment is an integral part of the life of most sixth formers. This needs to be taken into account when counselling and advising our students.

Saffron Walden County High School, Saffron Walden

Stephen Munday

School context

Saffron Walden County High School is a large rural comprehensive school with foundation status. It has 1785 pupils and a sixth form of 360. The sixth form offers over 20 A Level courses, five Advanced GNVQ courses and one Intermediate GNVQ course. Two-thirds of students take A Level courses, one third take GNVQ courses. Between 80 and 90 per cent of all sixth form students proceed to university courses. There is a strong emphasis in the sixth form both on high attainment and involvement in the school. Every sixth form student is expected to have at least one meaningful responsibility. The average A Level points score in recent years of 22 points per candidate. The majority of GNVQ grades are gained at Distinction level and the ALIS system suggests overall high levels of value added.

The research project

There were two aims of the research activity:

1. To try to measure the impact of part-time employment upon the attainment of sixth form students.

2. To discover some of the possible influences upon sixth formers decisions to do part-time employment.

The principal reason for choosing this research was a 'feeling' among the sixth form tutorial team that under-achievement was associated with too much part-time employment by sixth formers. Sixth form tutors often reported anecdotes of individuals doing large numbers of hours and getting into trouble with their studies as a result. Parents and students had been told at the beginning of the sixth form that too much paid employment was damaging and should be avoided. A figure from a study reported in the TES was used suggesting that any more than ten hours paid employment per week began to have a negative impact upon performance. In this sense, there was an informal hypothesis behind the research, namely that any part-time paid employment in excess of ten hours per week leads to a measurable decline in attainment.

The principal task of the research was to gather data about the number of hours worked by different sixth form students and to correlate this with data about the performance of those students. Performance could be measured in two ways: value-added measures and raw scores. Value added measures are seen as the more meaningful measurement of student attainment but it was decided to measure raw scores as well in case that revealed any interesting findings.

A simple questionnaire was devised in order to gather data on the number of hours worked by sixth form students. Gathering appropriate data on student attainment was more challenging. The only true, hard data that could really be used would be on students who had completed their courses and received their results. However, this data was too hard to gather. Therefore, projected results on Year 13 students were taken as the next best alternative. This meant gathering data on the predicted results of individual students on the basis of their GCSE points' score. This immediately restricted the research to A Level students as reliable figures of this sort could not be easily gained. The predicted grades for individual subjects were derived from the SIMS value-added data base. These were then compared with estimated A Level grades for relevant Year 13 students issued by teaching staff in November 1999. This gave a measure of likely value added for the students involved that could be compared with part-time hours worked.

Possible influences on decisions regarding part-time employment were also gained using a questionnaire. A further question was added to the questionnaire to try to find out whether those students currently undertaking paid employment would reduce those hours if they were to study an extra subject. This was deemed to be a relevant question in light of changes to the sixth form curriculum to be introduced in September 2000 as part of the changes involved in *Curriculum 2000*.

Research findings

A sample of 58 Year 13 A Level students was used. The main results are summarised in the table below:

Hours worked (per week)	% of students	Average number of subjects	Average value added residual per student	Average points score per student
0	28	3.19	+1.75	22.6
1 to 5	10	3.0	+1.0	24.0
6 to 10	40	3.13	+1.5	21.7
11 to 15	17	3.1	+1.2	17.8
16 or more	5	3.0	0	14.7

The following observations can be made about these research findings:

1. Nearly four out of five students do between 0 and 10 hours paid employment per week (as recommended by the school). This suggests that the desired message is, in most cases, getting through. The usual amount of paid employment is 6 to 10 hours although more than one in four students do no paid employment at all.

2. The number of 'A' levels taken is not correlated with the amount of paid employment (possibly contrary to expectations that students may have dropped a subject in order to accommodate higher numbers of paid employment hours).

3. The value added residual is only noticeably affected once more than 15 hours paid employment per week is done. This is in slight contradiction to the informal hypothesis that suggested that this figure could be affected once hours worked went above ten hours per week.

4. The small number of students in the category over 15 hours per week paid employment were not really characterised as having low ability. However, they were students who were seen as under-achievers right through their school careers, including their GCSE results. They appeared to lack commitment to academic study. As such, the raw results may be a better picture of their under-achievement than the value-added figures using GCSEs as the baseline figure.

5. There is a significant fall in average points score once 11 or more hours of paid employment per week are undertaken by students. This could well reflect the decisions of high attainers not to do much paid employment. Such students already have good GCSE results and are now proceeding to high 'A' level results. This will not result in a high value added figure in the statistics but appears to be a characteristic of high attainers.

6. There are three categories of students within the zero hours of work group:

- The 'educationally focused non-worker'. These students were not working due to a strong dedication to their studies. They were characterised by very high raw scores and significant positive value added residuals.
- Some students had major other interests (such as horses or a lot of sport). These students tended to have below average A Level performance.
- The 'excluded under-achievers'. These students wanted part-time employment but had failed to get it. They tended to be weak A Level performers.

For students currently working, the answer to whether they would do less part-time employment if studying another subject were as follows:

- Yes = 50%
- No = 50%

This seems inconclusive! However, it does suggest that a large number of students recognise the need for less part-time employment for those students due to start sixth form study in September.

The following results concern the possible influence of different factors upon the decision to under-take part-time employment. The minimum score (implying maximum influence) was one; the maximum score (implying minimum influence) was four.

Factor	Average score
Parental views	2.56
Friends' views	3.09
Statistics	2.61
Views of Form Tutor	2.89
Views of subject teacher	2.86
Views stated at an assembly	3.14
Views of a current sixth former	2.41

The conclusion from this is that the most effective strategies for a school attempting to limit the hours of paid employment undertaken by its sixth form students could be:

1. A talk by a current sixth former backed up by appropriate statistics.

2. Careful parental communication over the issue.

Implications for action by the school

The main implication for the school is that the previously held informal hypothesis is largely accurate. Once more than ten hours part-time employment is undertaken by sixth form students, student attainment (measured by predicted average A Level points scores) declines. Means of effectively limiting paid employment to that amount need to be fully considered. They could clearly include the possibilities suggested from the research above.

There is not much under-achievement in the sixth form. That which exists is associated with high levels of part-time paid employment (except in a few cases). Tackling under-achievement means tackling excessive hours worked.

Further areas meriting research

The main further area of research that is required is to follow up the findings on certain students who can be seen to be under-achieving. This is mainly with those who work a large number of hours but includes some who do no paid employment. Clearer pictures of the individuals involved are required. As the research suggests, it is not a simple case of high numbers of part-time paid employment hours causing under-achievement. To some extent, the line of causation could run in the opposite direction. Delving deeper into the causes of that under-achievement would be worthy research.

The Sandon School, Sandon

Richard Chandler

School context

The Sandon School is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive school of about 1050 students with 140 in the sixth form. It serves a socially diverse and semi-rural area to the south of Chelmsford. Students in Years 12 and 13 follow a wide range of A Level subjects with the majority taking three A Levels and A Level General Studies. A few take four subjects plus General Studies while a small number follow a GNVQ Advanced Business Studies course. The number of students in the sixth form has been increasing over the past few years as has the average A Level points score (23.1 in 1999).

The research project

With no previous research having been done on student part-time work in the school, it was decided that the general pattern would need to be investigated in the first instance. Three key questions were then looked at in some detail. The research work focused on the differences in the pattern of part-time work between Year 12 and 13, the reasons for students working and the effect the new curriculum reforms might have on their part-time commitments. It was originally envisaged that a comparison would be made between workers and non-workers and their attitude to part-time employment. However, as most students have a job it was felt that no real comparisons could be made due to the very small number of non-workers.

The main research method used in this study was a student questionnaire. It was completed by students, supervised by their tutors, with care being taken to ensure that there was no conferring between students while the form was being completed. It was decided that the questionnaire should be anonymous which would increase the chances of the true level of part-time work being recorded, although it was not possible to follow up responses made on the forms with the respective students. The importance of honesty when completing the form was stressed. There was a fear, prior to the investigation, that the sixth formers would put down information that they felt the school would like to hear. They were aware of our recommendations regarding the numbers of hours worked in a week. (This is relayed to both students and parents at a meeting held in September of each year.) However, it seems from the responses given on the forms that a true picture was obtained.

The questionnaire was written and piloted on a small number of students to test whether there were any problems with completion of the form. It was found to be easy to complete and not too time consuming. The questionnaire was then given to both Year 12 and 13 under the conditions described above.

The research findings

The questionnaires were analysed in a variety of different ways. It was hoped that a comparison of male and female responses might provide an interesting insight. However, due to the numbers involved it was felt that no meaningful conclusions could be made in this respect. However, there were some important differences between the responses made by Year 12 and 13. Whilst both years have a wide range of employment it was found that Year 12 mainly worked in the retail sector while the majority of Year 13 were employed in restaurants and pubs. As these two areas tend to have different working hours it would be interesting to see if this has an effect on their school work. The number of hours worked in one week showed a similar pattern for both years but it did concern the school that some were working more than the recommended number of hours.

Both years were asked *'Will you alter your work patterns as your exams approach?'* While just over half of Year 12 said they would work less, 75 per cent of Year 13 students recorded that they would reduce their hours. This finding could be related to the fact that the survey was carried out in February when the final A Level exams were looming for Year 13. However, it does show that Year 13 may be able to influence Year 12 on the number of hours worked, particularly when exam periods are approaching. The school will be looking into this aspect in future years.

The questionnaire also investigated the reasons for students undertaking part-time work. It was found that money was the main reason. There was no link between their current jobs and their intended future careers (i.e. they were not using their employment in the sixth form to gain experience of a possible career). The students also reported little pressure from employers to increase hours and it was also noted that the number of hours worked often varied from week to week.

Concern has been expressed by staff that the *Curriculum 2000* changes, due to take effect from September 2000, may be affected by the part-time working patterns. It is generally agreed that students will be under more pressure in the future. However, this was not a perception shared by the majority of students who felt that more subjects would have no effect on the number of hours worked. It will be interesting to report this survey next year and see whether the reality of more subjects has an effect on this aspect of work.

The school was also interested to find out when students were completing their homework (i.e. work to be done outside of lessons). Year 12 were found to do their homework during weekday evenings while Year 13 spent weekday evenings and Sundays doing it. This finding has raised some important questions and will require further examination. It may also point to issues that need to be addressed by the school (e.g. the amount of work set for Year 12 students).

It was mentioned earlier that there were very few non-workers in both years. Several of these non-workers were interviewed on an informal basis to ascertain the reasons for them not having a part-time job. Two students had sport commitments which included playing at weekends and training during the week in the evening. They reported that this made a part-time job very difficult. A couple of other students had low aspirations and tended to lack drive and enthusiasm. These had not gained part-time employment, even despite parental pressure to do so in one case – *'My dad keeps telling me to get a job.'* Lack of suitable work does not seem to be a reason for not working as students reported that there was plenty of work about and there was no problem getting it.

This research project has raised some interesting issues and provided information so the school can take action and offer advice in the area of part-time employment in post-16 students. A key issue seems to be students managing their own time, and it will be interesting to see whether the new curriculum changes will have an impact. This is an area of further work that will be addressed next year. However, one benefit, already seen in school as a direct result of this project, is the increased awareness of students that their part-time work may be having an effect on their studies. The school hopes to continue to raise the profile of this issue and intends to help the students to 'find a balance' between their academic work and part-time employment.

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